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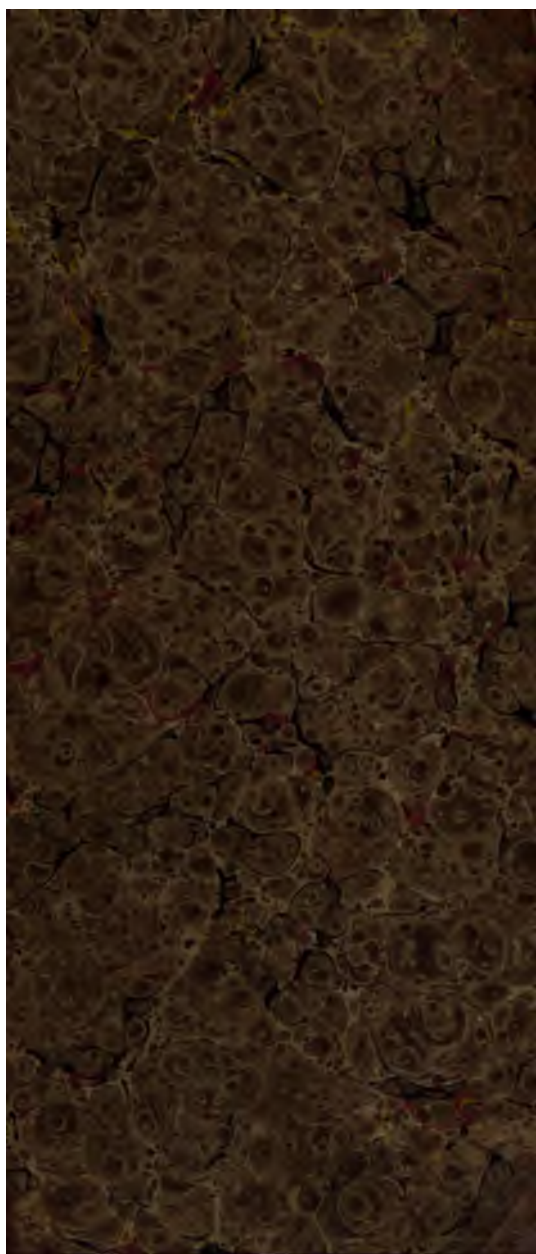
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v. S. 7. 1829.
THE

ANTIDOTE;

OR,

MEMOIRS

OF

A MODERN FREETHINKER:

INCLUDING

LETTERS AND CONVERSATIONS

ON

SCEPTICISM,

AND

THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

"Feliciter is apit, qui periculo alieno apit."—*Plautus*

VOL. I.



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PREFACE.

WE live at a period in which many bold attempts have been made to discredit the authority of religion, and imbue the public mind with sentiments of infidelity and atheism: and the success of these attempts, especially among young persons of a reading and speculative turn, in the metropolis and other parts of the kingdom, has been frequently acknowledged and deplored. It is, indeed, to be lamented that a large portion of the literature of the age, and many works daily issuing from the press in the most fascinating style of composition, are deeply tinged with the spirit of scepticism, and have become the means of diffusing it more widely in the most dangerous and insinuating forms. It is, therefore, incumbent on the lovers of christian truth, to use their best efforts to remedy the evil, and, as far as possible, to communicate to the public mind an antidote to infidelity, through the same channels which diffuse the poison. And

as no species of writing is more attractive, especially to young persons, than private biography, it is hoped the present work may in some degree effect this desirable purpose.

With this end in view, were the documents from which the writer compiled the following *Memoirs*, intrusted to his care, with full permission to make such use of them as he might think proper, if, upon mature consideration, he should deem the narrative worthy of public notice, and calculated to do good. But though the facts related are well known to the writer, due care has been taken to frustrate any attempt to ascertain the parties more immediately concerned. To gratify curiosity by disclosing any further particulars, would answer no good purpose. It has, therefore, been determined that no such disclosures shall be made. But if the following exercises of an ingenuous mind entangled in the mazes of infidelity, and the means of its restoration to the true and saving faith of the gospel, should afford relief to any who may yet be involved in the same perplexities, and should become an antidote to scepticism in christian families, the writer's ultimate design and best wishes respecting it will be answered.

November, 1827.

THE ANTIDOTE;
OR,
MEMOIRS
OF
A MODERN FREETHINKER.

CHAP. I.

HOWARD GLENVILLE, the subject of the following memoir, was born at a pleasant sequestered village on the borders of Gloucestershire, where his ancestors had lived in great respectability and comfort. From his earliest infancy he was brought up with extreme tenderness, and, as he grew into life, enjoyed the advantages of a pious and liberal education.

His father, **Mr. Glenville**, was a man of good sense and amiable manners. With strict integrity and a noble spirit of independence, he united a benevolent disposition and a large share of serious unobtrusive piety. His natural turn of mind was easy and unambitious. He was fond of reading

and retirement, and had no taste for the rivalry and ostentation of the great. He preferred the simple hospitality and sober recreations of rural life, to the exterior magnificence and dissipated manners of the city. Estimating things by a right test, he preferred the solid to the superficial, and the lasting satisfaction of pure and rational enjoyment, to the more fascinating but delusive pleasures of the gay.

If the knowledge of the world could be obtained only by conforming to its customs, and plunging into the vortex of its follies, Mr. Glenville was doubtless ignorant of the world. But if it can be acquired by reading and observation, by conversing with people of all ranks and characters, and by the use of a sound unbiassed judgment in the calm hours of retirement and study, we may safely affirm that his knowledge of men and things was as comprehensive and accurate as it was influential. He at least knew sufficient to convince him, that if the true dignity and happiness of life were his object, he must shun the ordinary courses of juvenile frivolity, and direct his taste to enjoyments more consonant with reason, and more conducive to the general good.

Although subject to the common failings of humanity, Mr Glenville's defects were best known

to himself and his most intimate companions, whose esteem and confidence bore ample testimony to his worth. Indeed, he was naturally imbued with "the milk of human kindness," and formed for the sympathies of friendship, and the endearments of domestic life. He possessed that happy combination of good sense, fine feeling, and unreserved ingenuousness, which, in the different relations of society, is best calculated to excite and reciprocate the warmest affection.

Mrs. Glenville sustained a corresponding character. In her personal features there were none of those showy attractions which, for a time, please the volatile, and draw within their circle a host of vain admirers and ephemeral friends. But her looks indicated great intelligence and benignity, glowing with the smile of love, and the lustre of benevolence. Her voice was sweet and melodious, and her manners gentle and unassuming; while the sprightliness of her wit, and the vivacity of her temper, were blended with a happy mixture of gravity and prudence. With a generous disposition, she united a strong mind and great firmness of character, which bore up against the current of prevailing dissipation, and sustained with composure the stroke of disappointment, and the shock

often made upon our feelings by the vicissitudes of life. Like the object of her confidence, she had formed correct views of the world, and a strong partiality for the social retirement and calm intercourse of home, blended with habits of piety and beneficence. In short, their union was cemented by a congeniality of taste and character, an identity of interest and feeling, a reciprocity of regard, which, combined with competence and religion, rarely fail to insure as large a portion of happiness as the present state of human infirmity will permit.

Blessed in the course of providence with a numerous family, Mr. and Mrs. Glenville were anxious to discharge the duties and enjoy the pleasures of the parental character. They perceived the importance of early impressions, in the developement of wrong propensities, and the production of a virtuous and happy disposition. They were aware that the peculiar lineaments of the character, whether good or evil, generally arise from the ideas which are most familiar to us in childhood and youth. They determined that no efforts on their part should be wanting, for the early improvement and moral purity of their children. Instead of leaving them to the sole

care of their domestics, and the process of a mercenary discipline, they esteemed it their duty and happiness to employ the best means which experience taught or affection suggested.

Commencing this task with their eldest son, they resolved, from his tenderest years, to repress, if possible, every wish in which there appeared to be the germ of a depraved propensity. With equal tenderness and judgment, they imposed a salutary restraint on the violence of passion and the impetuosity of inexperienced nature; while they were ready to gratify and commend every desire which indicated a tendency to goodness. As far as possible they avoided objects and impressions which occasion morose and irritable affections; but endeavoured to familiarize those which, by the influence of habit, conduce to placidity of temper and benevolence of disposition.

To this charge his fond mother devoted her attention, with that ingenuity, tenderness, and perseverance, which maternal wisdom and energy alone can devise and effect. While the gay and fashionable were absorbed in personal embellishments and fleeting pleasures, Mrs. Glenville, like the mother of the Gracchi, was consecrating her hours to the welfare of her children, and preparing

from the rude mass of untutored nature, the brightest ornaments and most valuable jewels of the mind. She had no relish for the empty applause of the vain. In discharging the maternal duties for the happiness of her family, she enjoyed a satisfaction no less pure and natural than delightful and sublime. Motives still more sacred impelled her to persevere; while Mr. Glenville's assistance and commendation relieved the mind from occasional discouragement, and gave new life and interest to her efforts. Nor did Howard frustrate their labours for his improvement. The outlines of his character were amiable and pre-possessing. His conduct was uniformly dutiful and affectionate. And the fondest hopes parents can indulge, as they observe the growing years and opening virtues of their offspring, appeared likely to be realized in the subject of this memoir.

But in cherishing these hopes, Mr. and Mrs. Glenville were anxious to imbue his mind, as early as possible, with the first principles of religion, a just sense of the importance of christianity, and a desire to be approved in the sight of God, as the surest pledge of his future rectitude, and the only solid foundation on which excellence of character can be reared. They perceived, indeed,

the necessity of that divine co-operation without which all human labours will be in vain. But in the right use of means they believed the divine favour might be confidently expected. The precepts and promises of the word of God convinced them, that the exertions of christian parents for the best interests of their offspring, when properly pursued, rarely fail of success, and are never wholly useless.

The world, it must be acknowledged, is not without its prejudices on this point. From the abuse of a religious education by the ignorant and fanatical, its use has in many cases been abandoned, and its propriety denied; even by men of some information and judgment, from whom a wiser mode of thinking might have been expected. Because some teach their children to repeat, like parrots, a crude mass of unintelligible dogmas, the shibboleths of a party, without leading them to a right perception of the nature and grounds of their belief; others exclude from their attention the most essential as well as the most dubious points of religious truth, and leave their families to form a creed for themselves as unassisted nature may direct. But if the former grow up to be narrow-minded bigots, whom no evidence can convince, and no excellence conciliate, what can

be expected of the latter, but the ready adoption of infidelity, or the habitual predominance of irreligion? The truth may possibly arrest their attention in riper years, and make its way to the mind, in defiance of all obstructions, with an overwhelming force; but from the constitution of nature, and the ordinary experience of mankind, we have no right to calculate on such a result. We might as well expect young persons suddenly to become able mathematicians and profound classics, without any previous attention to those sciences, as to expect piety and virtue flowing from sound principles in manhood, when the mind has received no infusion of those principles in youth.

The tendency of our nature to practical atheism and vicious pleasure can be restrained only by the authority of conscience and an early sense of religion. To suppose that the total neglect of religious inquiries in youth, will secure impartiality and a pure regard for the truth in the commencement and prosecution of those inquiries afterwards, would betray gross ignorance of the mind, or a criminal inattention to ordinary experience. The aversion, which arises from the innate selfishness and corrupt tendency of our nature, to the solemn

realities and moral restraints of christian truth, must inevitably acquire great strength before we arrive at years of discretion, unless checked by the timely influence of good principles instilled into the mind. When the passions are daily becoming more powerful against religion, what can preserve an even balance in its favour, but a growing sense of its importance, or a clearer perception of its truth? So that if we deemed the claims of the gospel dubious, and wished only to give the rising generation a fair chance of deciding impartially, we should at least give them sufficient information on the subject to remove all antipathy and prejudice. But if we believe it to be a divine system, essential to the brightest hopes and purest happiness of mankind, it would be nothing less than a moral infanticide to withhold from our children the best instruction we can give.

It must be confessed, that the efforts of christian parents for the religious education of their offspring are not always attended with success, but in some cases appear to be wholly nugatory. The fond hopes they at first indulge of seeing the reward of their exertions, in the steady faith and exemplary conduct of their children, are at length extinguished by their moral insensibility and pro-

fligate manners, which embitter their last years, or bring them prematurely to the grave. This inefficiency of pious instruction may, in some cases, result from the faulty plan used by the parents; from the want of co-operation and perseverance in a good plan; from excessive indulgence or ill-timed severity; and from other unobserved defects, which frustrate the best designs, and render the waywardness of youth more perverse and incorrigible. But in many such cases, of which these memoirs will supply more than one example, the impressions made on the mind in early life, under the solemn sanction of parental tenderness and piety, though long unnoticed and to all appearance obliterated, at last revive with peculiar energy and interest. In the extremities of danger or suffering, some long-forgotten truth, some solemn reminiscence of early piety, some tender and affecting scene, is brought before them with all the freshness of novelty, and by its silent and mysterious operation, produces a train of the happiest effects. Let none therefore be discouraged in their pious labours for the young! If the husbandman pursues the labours of agriculture, and plants the seed in due season, notwithstanding the casual failure or premature

destruction of his crops, let those intrusted with the higher charge of a moral husbandry, perform its duties with the same diligence, planting in the youthful mind the seeds of truth, and leaving the results to a wise and unerring providence.

With respect to the subject of education in general, and the best mode of initiating youth in its higher branches, Mr. Glenville entertained some questionable opinions. From some cause, he had formed a strong and invincible prejudice against most of the public schools, in which the youth of this country are educated preparatory for college. He was aware of the advantages of those institutions, in sometimes awakening the energies of youthful minds, and introducing young men of good family to a large circle of friends. But he thought these advantages were more than counterbalanced by attendant evils. He believed that a private system of tuition, under the immediate direction of a good master, is best calculated to enlarge the mind and form the character, as well as to prevent loose principles and profligate manners. And in adopting this plan, other motives of a local nature, insured Mrs. Glenville's concurrence.

When, therefore, the subject of this memoir

arrived at an age which required the assistance of a more learned tutor, his education was committed to the care of Mr. Ward, vicar of the same parish, who had long enjoyed the friendship of Mr. and Mrs. Glenville, and from whose exertions they anticipated a favourable result. Indeed, his amiable manners and candid disposition had, in the first place, secured their esteem, which an intimacy of some years' continuance had confirmed. He was likewise reckoned a good classic and an able mathematician. His attainments in natural and moral philosophy, and in the various branches of useful and polite literature, were respectable. His political principles were truly pacific and constitutional, though he made no pretensions to the character of a politician, nor sunk the divine in the partisan. His views of men and things were for the most part liberal and judicious. And what is of greater consequence, he was a true christian in the primitive sense of the term, and a faithful minister of the New Testament.

With controversial theology indeed, Mr. Ward was little conversant. Steady in his belief as a christian preacher, and warm in his attachment to the church, he was even averse to the discussion of those questions which have given rise to the pre-

vailing divisions and animosities of the christian world. Taking the doctrines of christianity for granted, and residing in a village undisturbed by the spirit of contention, his discourses were chiefly confined to experimental and practical religion, and directed solely to the heart and conduct of his parishioners. His own example added weight to his instructions ; while his candour and beneficence endeared him to the flock over which he presided with fidelity and success.

Under the care of the worthy vicar, Howard made considerable proficiency in classical attainments and general knowledge, and in a short time began to exemplify in himself the sketch we have drawn of his tutor's character. His aptitude and docility in learning the rudiments of science, soon gained his instructor's approbation and confidence, and augmented the satisfaction with which the one communicated, and the other received, knowledge. The ideas of labour and restraint yielded to those of pleasure, and sentiments of friendship took the place of subordination and authority. The mind of Howard, as he pursued his studies, gradually disclosed those amiable and superior, though modest and unobtrusive qualities, which are

deemed the surest presage of distinguished worth: nor was Mr. Ward slow to perceive or backward to encourage their improvement.

In connection with classical pursuits and other liberal accomplishments, Mr. Ward deemed it his duty to carry forward that process of religious instruction and christian discipline, which Mr. and Mrs. Glenville had begun. Indeed, it would be absurd to suppose that a christian teacher, sensible of the importance of education, and qualified to conduct its process, could form a plan, or undertake the responsibility of juvenile instruction, without making the interests of virtue and piety a paramount concern. A due acquaintance with the nature and evidences of christianity, in subservience to the formation of religious character, should be deemed an essential part of christian education. A course of tuition from which theology is excluded, considered merely in an intellectual point of view, is essentially defective. Theology, apart from existing institutions, is a science of universal interest, which involves the well-being of society, and employs the warmest affections and noblest powers of the human mind. A general knowledge of its history, its modifica-

tions, its authority and its relative influence, should be recommended and pursued, as one of the highest branches of a liberal education. There is no case more incongruous to reason, or more dishonourable to a christian family, than the state of a learned and polished youth bidding adieu to his *alma mater*, and entering into active life, loaded with all the honours of classical erudition and general scholarship, but less informed upon religion, and less accurate in his views of theology, than a common mechanic or a village labourer. And yet cases of this description, it is thought, even in this enlightened age and country, have not unfrequently happened.

But to suppose Howard Glenville was likely to become a youth of this character, would be to invalidate the testimony we have borne to the good sense and christian piety of his tutor. Mr. Ward would have shrunk with just indignation from the thought of leading him through a course of liberal instruction, without coupling with it a proper sense of his relation to the Deity; or of sending him forth into the world, even within the precincts of an English university, with his mind unimbued with christian principles. A recognition of the

divine authority, in the solemn and ancient form of family devotion, was indeed blended with their daily engagements; while its solemnity was duly modified and endeared by the habitual cheerfulness and mild dignity of personal religion.

There was nothing, however, from which the worthy vicar seemed more anxious to preserve his pupil than intolerance and fanaticism. He considered the abuse of religion, under the forms of superstition, enthusiasm, and persecution, as some of the worst fruits of human degeneracy, the bitterest ingredients of the curse. He regarded intolerance, among christians in particular, as a fatal hydra, produced in the corrupt marshes of christianity, within whose reach every thing lovely and divine perishes, and from whose influence, always springing up under new and monstrous forms, nothing but the pure spirit of christian truth and christian charity can rescue and preserve the churches.

With these sentiments the mind of Howard was deeply imbued. He became an enthusiast for liberty. The rights of conscience, the inalienable freedom of the mind, liberty to think and to express our thoughts, the right of all men to judge

for themselves what is truth, and to offer to the Deity that worship which they deem most acceptable, without infringing on the security and happiness of each other; were the favourite themes on which he was always ready to think and expatiate. The sacred fire, taken from the altar of nature's God, was not suffered to expire or languish. Every science added fresh fuel to the flame, or fanned it more intensely. The more he knew of the moral history and political condition of mankind, the more his abhorrence of tyranny under every form, and his love of liberty, civil and religious, were increased. He saw that freedom and independence, secured to all classes by impartial laws, are identified with moral integrity, public confidence, and indeed every virtue which promotes the true happiness of life, or confers honour upon humanity. To dispossess men of their religious liberty, or to impose shackles on the conscience, under pretence of promoting their spiritual interests, is to dispossess them of all that can dignify human nature, or render this short life worth having. A sacred regard for the rights of conscience became an inseparable part of his moral creed, was interwoven with the texture of his

mind, and seemed likely to go with him to the sepulchre.

But whatever commendation might in some respects be due to Mr. Ward's plan, it was in others chargeable with a serious deficiency. In the ordinary course of parochial teaching, it might convey a sufficient measure of religious knowledge to promote social rectitude and christian piety. But in the case of a youth destined for the activities of life, and exposed to the snares of a bold and speculative age, it was unsafe not to include a course of systematic instruction, with regard to the theory of religion in general, and the claims of different creeds. Christianity was rather assumed to be of divine authority, than proved to be so by a chain of conclusive reasoning, and the proper adjustment of its proofs. The sophistries of atheism and the plausible objections of modern sceptics, instead of being candidly adduced and ably refuted, were rather concealed from the youthful inquirer, and seldom adverted to, except in terms of general lamentation and censure. Controverted doctrines were passed over with a slight notice; and the faith of ages, or the well-grounded confidence of the teacher, substituted in the place of

luminous discussion, and convincing argument. The pupil's belief was strong, his creed orthodox, and his piety genuine. But it too much resembled the strength of the untried, the orthodoxy of ignorance, and the piety of a sequestered village or a lone hermitage.

But the danger arising from this defect was then future. It was unforeseen by the parties most interested, till it was too late to provide a remedy. But if the want of foresight overlooked the caution necessary against future dangers, it prevented the anticipation of evils that might never come. Howard's course of instruction passed on smoothly, and his proficiency in various knowledge seemed to evince the wisdom of his teacher, while it afforded his parents ample satisfaction. The purity of his morals, the cheerful gravity of his disposition, his ardour in the pursuit of science, and the developement of talents adapted for public usefulness, combined with filial piety, and a vigorous state of health, left nothing scarcely to desire or regret, but gratified the feelings, and raised the hopes, of parental tenderness and ambition. Nor did he rise in the esteem of those only on whom a blind and mis-

taken partiality might be supposed to operate ; but the regard entertained for his character grew with his age, and extended with the circle of his acquaintance. The congratulations of the neighbourhood, often received by Mr. and Mrs. Glenville, responded to their own feelings, and diffused over their family circle a pleasure more grateful to christian parents, than splendid accessions of wealth, or prospects of secular preferment.

CHAP. II.

In the formation of character, and the development of peculiar talents, few things have more influence than family discipline, and the most remarkable incidents of youth. Where indeed can nature's waywardness be restrained? where can the best feelings of humanity be nurtured? where can we taste the comfort of love, and cultivate habits of sympathy and benevolence? or, where can mankind, rising into life, imbibe principles of probity and honour, or form an estimable and useful character, except within the small but sacred inclosure of home?

The duties of consanguinity appeal with equal force to the selfish and social principle. The interests of families are inseparable, and the pains and pleasures, the honour and disgrace of each, are shared by the whole. None can suspend the flow of their affection, or wound others by indifference or severity, without impairing their own comfort and inflicting on themselves the severest wound.

There is nothing in nature more lovely in itself, or more auspicious to society, than the affectionate regard and harmonious intercourse of families. Nor can any thing be more repulsive or more ominous than the daily neglect, morose tempers, bitter reproaches, and reciprocal dislikes, which indicate the extinction or languid existence of filial and fraternal love.

It doubtless requires much less virtue to behave well, and evince all the marks of an estimable character, in the circle of ordinary associates than at home. Policy alone may secure the one, while the other can result only from habitual kindness and self-control. Persons may be esteemed among their acquaintance, as cheerful companions, or generous good natured friends, the staunch advocates of liberty and benevolence, when, in the mean time, at home, they are uniformly morose, petulant, and tyrannical. After provoking themselves and each other by their fiend-like tempers and reciprocal abuse, they will go forth into the world with the calmness of a summer's evening, and welcome the companions of an hour with looks of kindness, and the cheering accents of compliment and esteem. They are like Satan, of whom it has been said that he is always a devil in his own domains, but transforms himself into an

angel of light, when he goes among people ignorant of his true character.

But this shows the value of parental discipline and example. The peace and unanimity of families, doubtless, in many cases, depend on the natural temper and constitutional sensibility of their members. While some are endued with a temper too placid and yielding for the most wayward circumstances to provoke, the innate irritability and haughtiness of others, compel even the meek to frown, and the supine to resist their assumptions. Nevertheless, much may be effected by a wise authority and a good spirit. Though parental example may sometimes fail, there are few so wayward as to receive no benefit from its influence. Children are often too shrewd and sensitive on this point. They observe things that are supposed to be unknown, and receive impressions of which their parents are unconscious. If precept be unaccompanied with good temper and mutual respect, children will soon find a plea for their own petulance and ill-nature. If the kind looks and verbal endearments of parents, be too often changed for gloomy frowns and bitter invectives, the former will produce but a feeble and transient influence, while the effects of the latter may be permanent

and invincible. Nothing indeed can secure family affection and unanimity, but a wise course of discipline steadily pursued, unbending authority exercised with mildness and impartiality, and the social duties explained and recommended frequently and without disguise.

It was one of the first concerns of Mr. and Mrs. Glenville, in the government of their family, to preserve the sacred flow of their affections steady and unruffled. Knowing from their own experience how much the sorrows of life may be relieved, and its joys heightened, by unchanging confidence and love, they were the more anxious for their offspring to enjoy the same happiness. They did all that precept and example could effect, to prevent those rude shocks by which the sensibility of natural tenderness is often wounded, to draw the ties of nature more closely about them, and to render the duties of consanguinity easy and delightful. Nor did they labour for this end in vain, but were amply recompensed in the growing affection of their children for themselves and for one another. The smile of love often appeared in their daily intercourse, glowing in every countenance. Their tone of voice, no less than their expressions, indicated mutual kindness and respect. Instead of

waiting to be asked, or of yielding only to urgent entreaty, they chose rather to anticipate each other's wishes. There seemed to be a noble emulation, which should excel in marks of filial piety and brotherly esteem. In the reception of particular favours, selfishness and envy, so common among children, were in a great measure overcome by generosity and mutual preference, "each esteeming others better than themselves." And when their views clashed in the choice of an object, the disappointment was borne with good temper, and each resigned the claim to his competitor. Nothing was more painful to their feelings than sudden bursts of passion, or casual interruptions of family peace, which rendered paternal rebuke necessary. Nor did any thing diffuse over them a more lively pleasure than the praise sometimes bestowed on particular instances of sympathy and attention.

In the culture of these amiable affections, Howard and his eldest sister, who was a year and half older than himself, were assiduous and exemplary. Their seniority in the family, which rendered their example of greater consequence, contributed in no small degree to the rapid growth and early maturity of their virtues. The affection

Lucy had always shewn toward her brother, even from his infancy, was cherished on his part with corresponding tenderness. Their attachment grew with their growth, and ripened with their maturity. The impulse of nature was continued, and the bonds of consanguinity strengthened, by improving intercourse and a congenial taste. Kindness, at first recommended by parental example and a sense of duty, was at length blended with all the movements of the mind, and seemed no less natural than permanent and delightful.

Howard and his sister, in the earlier part of their education, would often spend their hours of relaxation in rehearsing their respective studies, which rendered the path of learning more smooth, and its flowery fields more beautiful. It was their delight on a summer's evening to ramble through the meadows, to stroll along the banks of the Avon, to watch the finny tribes in their shady element, to collect the primrose and honeysuckle, or to listen to the sweet melody of the grove. And when a more vigorous exercise was deemed salutary, they loved to sally forth with Mr. Glenville, in his excursions to the neighbouring towns and adjacent villages. Their example was indeed beautiful and instructive. It was the admiration of their con-

nexions. To their parents it afforded no common pleasure; while its influence daily became more auspicious to the younger children.

But, alas! how precarious are all sublunary enjoyments! The angel of suffering, while dispensing to others the bitter draught, envied their happiness, and prepared for them an infusion of sorrow. Afflictions, indeed, often come when least expected, and arise from sources which aggravate their severity. Children of the fairest promise fall prematurely, and are torn from the embrace of parental tenderness, when doated on most fondly. This was the case with Miss Glenville, who was removed at a period of life when the female character assumes its sweetest attractions, and begins to reward the labours and realize the hopes of parental care. The first symptoms of declining health naturally threw a damp over the cheerfulness of the family circle, and awakened in the breast of Howard especially, many distressing fears. Though reluctant to complain, she often betrayed marks of weariness and languor which no vivacity of temper could conceal. A serious change was silently taking place in her constitution, and the bloom of health drooped and faded like a vernal rose smitten by the east wind. And after a few

months, these symptoms of decline baffled the effects of medicine, and daily appeared more alarming.

A change of air was recommended by the faculty as the likeliest means of retarding, if not removing, the malady, which threatened Lucy with a premature and speedy death. Having some connexions in the vicinity of Bristol, whose society and friendship would be soothing to an invalid, Mr. and Mrs. Glenville determined to try the benefit of a change in that neighbourhood. When the spring was sufficiently advanced, they accompanied Miss Glenville to Clifton, hoping that new scenes, and a few months' enjoyment of the sea breezes in that interesting spot, would contribute much to her convalescence. At first, she felt considerable benefit from the change. Some of the most painful symptoms subsided, and her countenance seemed to indicate improving health. The physician gave them great hopes that the seeds of decay, which had taken deep root in her constitution, would in due time be eradicated, and its vital powers restored to their former energy. These symptoms of convalescence renewed her wonted vivacity, and endeared to her both the scenes and the society of Clifton. During the intervals of retirement from the company of her friends, and

the course of exercise recommended by the faculty, she evinced the excellence of her disposition, and gave full scope to her filial and sisterly affections, in a regular correspondence with Howard and her beloved mother. The following letter to her brother, written soon after her arrival at Clifton, may serve as a specimen of her kindness and abilities.

Clifton, May 20th, 1802.

My dear Howard,

I need not tell you with how much pleasure I shall now attempt to fulfil my promise of writing to you. I could wish, indeed, that my vivacity and strength were more equal to the warmth of my affection, and the pleasure I am anxious you should have in the perusal of this letter. But though my health and spirits are considerably improved since I have been at Clifton, I feel myself but a feeble invalid still, and am soon overcome by a little exertion. But my confidence in your regard, forbids me to apologize for any faults you may perceive in my letters.

Having promised to tell you the principal things that might occur to me, I shall go back to the day of my leaving home. The morning of our departure, you know, was very beautiful, and

the whole day continued remarkably pleasant till our arrival here in the evening. Except the clouds of sorrow which gathered over the lodge as we departed, and the tear-drops which fell on the occasion, in which I confess my own flowed profusely; excepting these, we had neither rain nor clouds to increase the sadness, or prevent the good effects of the journey. Indeed, the gloom we at first felt was greatly dispersed, and the cheerfulness of our spirits heightened, by the variety of new scenes presented to the eye, in which nature smiled with all the freshness and beauty of the spring.

I was highly gratified with many of the views, and thought some parts of the road particularly delightful; especially the appearance of the Severn below Gloucester, rolling its wide and majestic flood into the Bristol channel; together with a distant view of the coast of Devon, and the Welsh mountains. The first sight we had of Bristol was also gratifying. Its appearance from Kingsdown, where the eye can see at once its extent, the number of churches, and the shipping floating upon the river, seemed to me a grand and imposing spectacle. But for beautiful and sublime scenery, few parts of the kingdom, I am told, surpass the

neighbourhood of Clifton, of which I would gladly give you a more lively description.

Last evening, for the first time, I took a walk to the Hotwells, at the foot of St. Vincent's rocks, the view of which struck me with admiration and delight. The river at this part is very narrow, but its serpentine course adds much to the beauty of the landscape. The tide was flowing in with great rapidity, and several large West Indiamen were towed up the river by a number of boats, which was to me a novel and interesting sight. The rocks rise to a great height on both sides the channel, which seems like a deep chasm formed by an earthquake. Some of them are perpendicular, abrupt, and even projecting; while others form an irregular declivity, covered with trees and underwood, from the base to the summit. Nature has here united into one view the sublime and beautiful, the terrific and pleasing, as though she meant at once to contrast and yet to blend their respective qualities. On one side, we heard people blowing up the rock with gunpowder, and saw immense masses of it rolling down into the valley, to be used for limestone and other purposes. On ascending the rock by a circuitous path, we proceeded to inspect the ruins of a tower, called

Cook's Folly; and thence wandered along the precipice, with cautious steps, gazing with mingled feelings of terror and delight on the grand and enchanting scenery. It was indeed a solemn and interesting excursion, and gave rise to a train of serious and affecting thoughts. The grandeur of nature seemed to give me a more vivid perception of the Divine Majesty. And while the idea of his power, which spake these wonders into being, filled me with a solemn awe the assurance of his wisdom, love, and faithfulness, soothed and tranquillized my feelings, and bid me trust in him as my constant benefactor and friend.

In taking my usual walks, I cannot help wishing a thousand times over, my dear brother, that you could spend a week or two with me at Clifton, if it were only for the pleasure of seeing these romantic objects. But how much would your company relieve the gloom which often arises from the thoughts of home, and the fond remembrance of departed happiness! But I ought not, just now at least, to desire so great a sacrifice of your time, which I have no doubt you are improving to a better purpose.

I sometimes used to think my regard for our honoured parents, and the pleasure I took in the

friendship of so kind a brother, were sufficiently ardent; and the gratitude I felt for the many enjoyments of our native home, in a great measure proportioned to their value. But separation has convinced me of my error in thinking so; and I now see that the full value of these enjoyments can be known only by their loss. Yes, my dear Howard, the separation from home is more painful than I expected to find it; and I have no reason to think that time will lessen the privation, or induce me to reckon it no trial: But I hope it will do me good, by preparing me for a more solemn and lasting separation, which, I fear, may soon come. My feelings indeed cling to life with a firm grasp, and the thought of its early termination is gloomy and repulsive. A fond hope still hovers around me, and presents to the eye of fancy some pleasing visions of renewed health and a long life of comfort and prosperity. But distressing fears often steal in, and picture to the mind a train of the gloomiest thoughts, which I have neither cheerfulness nor fortitude sufficient to repel. But in the prospect of that separation, so painful to think of, I am often consoled by the hope that it will only be transient, when the friendships so dear to us now, will be renewed and perfected in a nobler

and happier state for ever. With this hope, I would wish to resign myself to the merciful disposals of our heavenly Father and Saviour.

But I must now close this pensive letter, and expecting to hear from you very soon,

I remain, dear Howard,

Your most affectionate sister,

Lucy Glenville.

The expectations at first entertained of Miss Glenville's recovery were soon found to be delusive, and the symptoms of convalescence rather diminished than improved. The seeds of a pulmonary consumption had taken too deep root for medicine to eradicate, or a change of climate to subdue. After a few months, she returned to the Lodge, when a gradual decay of strength awakened the tenderness of her sympathizing friends, and in a short time extinguished the hope of her recovery. While she was able to take exercise in the open air, Howard was the companion of her excursions. And when growing weakness denied that pleasure, and rendered her confinement to the sick chamber necessary, he was glad to spend many of his leisure hours in her society, conversing about subjects of mutual interest, or reading selections from her favourite authors, in which the sacred writings

had the chief place. She was not distressed at the gloomy event that awaited her, nor reluctant to talk of it; but she endeavoured to fortify her own mind, and sustain the feelings of her relatives, by becoming more familiar with the idea of death, and the prospect of future happiness. She had certainly much cause to wish for life, and might well deprecate the hour of separation from parents and friends endeared by a thousand ties. Yet she discovered no unreasonable anxiety or impatience, but left the issue of her affliction to a wise though inscrutable providence.

A short time before her decease, when Howard went as usual to enquire after her health, and to spend an hour in her company, she appeared remarkably depressed, and her looks indicated great mental anxiety. Alarmed at her appearance, he was eager to know the cause of her distress, which he supposed might be occasioned by the gloomy symptoms of decay.

“My health,” said Lucy “is not sensibly worse than it has been for some time past; but my spirits, this morning, are unusually depressed, and I have tried in vain to resume my accustomed cheerfulness. I fear I am doing wrong to cherish these feelings, and would gladly resign every

thing into the hands of our heavenly Preserver, whose mercy it would be criminal to doubt."

"I am afraid," replied Howard, "you have been thinking too much of the gloomy idea of death, and the dismal separation which makes us all shudder. Do not, I entreat you, my dear Lucy, suffer it to prey so much upon your spirits. We must not relinquish all hope of your recovery, nor mistrust the sufficiency of Divine Providence, which has often raised others, and may yet raise you, from the borders of the tomb. But if the fatal moment must come, you have no reason to be afraid of the change, or to doubt your future happiness. The Saviour whom you have always served, will not forsake you at the last hour, when the promises of his word are most necessary."

"No, my dear brother," answered she, "I am not afraid of dying. Though sensible of my demerit in the sight of God, I hope to be accepted through faith in the great Redeemer. The truths and promises of the gospel support and comfort me. It is the separation, the separation from you, my dear Howard, which distresses me."

"That is, indeed, most distressing to all of us," replied he, "and the dread of it sometimes overwhelms me. But should we not remember, that

the separation will be very short? Do we not hope to meet again in a happier world, where pain, and sorrow, and separation, will never come? I know you have always had this hope, and you must not lose the comfort of it now."

"Alas!" said she, "if it were only a transient separation, I could bear it with serenity. But the idea of its eternity overwhelms me. O Howard! how can I bear the thought of losing you for ever!"

"My dearest Lucy," rejoined he, "you quite confound and distress me, and I am utterly at a loss how to answer you. How can you indulge these dismal forebodings, or what have you seen in me to excite them? I know, indeed, that I have fallen short of my duty as a christian, and have too much need to be admonished for the time to come. The dangers to which my youth exposes me are many, and continued watchfulness and prayer will be indispensable. But it has hitherto been my earnest concern to believe and obey the gospel; and by the divine assistance, I trust my faith and piety will remain firm. I hope, therefore, your fears respecting me are wholly groundless."

"I hope so too," answered Lucy; "indeed I have no reason to doubt it; and am sorry to indulge any such fears on your account. It was

nothing but the reverie of a gloomy imagination, that made me feel this unhappiness; and I confess myself very weak and blamable for suffering it to affect me. I was in great hopes of concealing the circumstance, lest it should make you unhappy, or induce you to think I had been doubting the sincerity or steadiness of your religion. Be assured I have seen no reason to entertain such hard thoughts respecting you. I will endeavour to banish the gloomy impression from my feelings. I hope you will not think any more of it, but let the subject be dropped immediately. I am sorry it was mentioned."

But this attempt of Lucy to conceal her thoughts, instead of satisfying Howard, only increased his curiosity. Overcome by his importunity, she related the particulars of the dream which had so sensibly affected her; but whether it was a waking or a sleeping dream, she was not able to say. She thought, however, that her immortal spirit had taken its departure from the body, and was admitted into the heavenly mansions. There she was introduced to the friendship of her pious ancestors and other glorified spirits, who enjoyed the beatific vision of the Saviour. There she beheld an infinite number of celestial beings, encircling the

Divine Majesty, and engaged in the most solemn and delightful worship. But their happiness and glory were too great for imagination to conceive or language to express. After a short interval, she thought her beloved parents and other esteemed friends, were admitted to the same blissful employments. And at length she saw Howard himself approaching the judgment seat, and was going to welcome his arrival at a state of such ineffable felicity. But, at that moment, an angel of high authority stepped forward, and accused him of apostacy from the faith of Christ and the moral purity of christian conduct. Confounded at the charge, she thought he stood speechless and self-condemned, when the awful sentence, from which there was no appeal, was passed upon him by the judge. As he turned away from the tribunal, overwhelmed with remorse and shame, she heard him utter a shriek of heart-rending despair, which for a moment excited feelings of indescribable tenderness and regret. Under the pressure of these feelings, in which the vividness of imagination operated like the reality, she awoke in the greatest agitation. And though it relieved her to find it was nothing but a reverie or a dream, yet the scenes fancy had pictured, preyed deeply on her

spirits, and occasioned the pensiveness before mentioned.

Lucy was not superstitious, nor had she the least faith in dreams or other imaginary prognostics. But the possibility of its proving true, with respect to her brother's apostacy and final doom, forced itself on the mind with irresistible conviction. She had the highest opinion of his present piety, and could have no valid reason to doubt his steadiness and perseverance. And yet the idea that one so dear to her, might, after all, become an infidel, and perish at the last day, left an impression which she could neither efface nor endure.

Howard was scarcely less affected by the gloomy incident than his sister had been, but he endeavoured to disguise his feelings. After an interval of silence, and a profusion of tears, he attempted still further to soothe and tranquillize her spirits. The circumstance, he remarked, might have a salutary effect, and be designed as a timely admonition against future dangers: and by exciting him to greater circumspection, might prevent the decline of religion, and ensure the steadiness of his virtue. But in retirement he resigned himself to the full impression of these imaginary scenes, and felt the deep anguish and solicitude of a wounded

spirit. Like a deer smitten by the hunter, seeking the cool shade and refreshing stream, he sought relief in the stillness of solitude and the efficacy of prayer.

In the mean time, the disease which had long preyed on the gentle frame of Lucy, was drawing to a crisis, and every day threatened to be the last. But as the hour of dissolution was approaching, her serenity and fortitude increased. While the outward form gradually decayed, the nobler principle within evinced greater vividness and elevation. Her faith in Christ strengthened with its necessity, and she enjoyed, "the full assurance of hope unto the end." Her conversation, till the last, was solemn, instructive, and heavenly. And when the strength of nature was exhausted by disease, and the tabernacle of clay taken down by the hand of death, its nobler inhabitant, the immortal spirit, ascended to glory. She grew and ripened, like a flower of unusual beauty in the spring; and was then removed to a more genial clime, to bloom for ever in the paradise of God.

To Mr. and Mrs. Glenville, this bereavement was trying and severe. But their grief was silent and dignified, though deep and undissembled. It was softened down by the influence of faith and

hope, mingled with devout resignation to the Disposer of all things. They mourned, indeed, rather for their own loss, than for the departed; while their tears were wiped away, and their minds comforted, by the remembrance of her virtues, and the prospect of meeting her again in a better world.

Howard was at first inconsolable. Her dying features were always in his view. A silent gloom overspread his countenance, and extinguished for a time his usual vivacity. He sought a refuge in his studies. The scriptures became increasingly his delight. His piety assumed a more pensive and decided character. The natural gravity of his disposition was confirmed, and his thoughts directed more intensely to the sublime and consoling doctrines of religion. As far as his fears would permit, he anticipated the renewal of that friendship which the death of his much-loved sister had unhappily dissolved. The train of thought and feeling awakened by the bereavement, both mitigated his sorrow, and left on his mind a deep and lasting impression; which, although for a time overlooked, was never wholly effaced. It was the first death he had witnessed, and the last he forgot.

CHAP III.

How frequently do events apparently trivial, originate a new course of thinking, change the current of our affections, and lead through life to a series of important consequences! Though but little regarded, perhaps, at the moment, they become afterwards the principal epochs of our private and public history, from which we may date the commencement of a wise course of conduct, or a valuable friendship. These important incidents are seldom much noticed, indeed, except in the memoirs of distinguished persons, or in cases of remarkable vicissitude. But it is probable that cases of a similar description might be found in the history of ordinary men, were they to observe more attentively the formation of their characters, and the principal events which influence their alliances and pursuits. If the fall of an apple led the mind of Newton to those discoveries

in philosophy which have immortalized his name; if the circumstance of touching a dead frog with the point of his cane, suggested to the ingenious Galvani, some of the most interesting phenomena of electricity; and if the sight of a picture in childhood was an incident to which one of the most eminent artists of modern times traced the bent of his genius and his celebrity; it cannot be questioned that domestic events of peculiar interest, like those contained in the last chapter, frequently determine the character and destiny of men, even when they are unconscious of the influence.

But the mind of Howard Glenville was too susceptible of strong impressions, and too yielding in its texture, not to be affected and controlled by so painful an incident. The bent of his inclinations, and his course of study, were, in consequence, turned to the clerical profession, in the choice of which, Mr. and Mrs. Glenville readily acquiesced. They thought it was a sphere of exertion suited to his taste and talents, in which his time might be employed with honour to himself, and advantage to the community.

Some indications of his future adaptation for public life were, indeed, observed in the earliest

developements of his genius. His thirst for knowledge, his choice of books, and the sciences in which he felt the most pleasure and made the greatest proficiency, imperceptibly drew his attention from the idea of commerce to the learned professions. A natural fluency of speech, likewise, combined with a melodious voice, and the modest assurance he displayed in reciting his favourite authors or delivering his own compositions, seemed to intimate that the pulpit or the bar was the destined sphere of his exertions. Here, indeed, his choice long wavered. The claims of both seemed urgent, and he was sometime in doubt to which the preference should be given. In the pulpit he would have to defend the morals and religion of his country; at the bar he might advocate its rights. The former appealed to his religious feelings, and invited him to a task most congenial to his taste. But the honour and distinction of the latter, so flattering to youthful and aspiring minds, for a time preserved an even balance in its favour, and held his judgment in suspense.

Whatever were Mr. and Mrs. Glenville's predilections on this point, they were neither precipitate nor over anxious to decide. They looked with pity and regret on those parents who devote their

sons to the Church without regard to character or talent, merely to preserve some valuable benefice in the family, or otherwise gain an easy and respectable support. If the ancient sages, when describing the qualifications of public men, maintained it as an essential preliminary, "that an orator ought to be a good man;" surely none can for a moment think of dispensing with this prerequisite in a christian preacher. What form of human degeneracy can be more contemptible or more criminal, than the conduct of a man who teaches christianity to others, without being himself a christian; who recommends piety to his parishioners, but who has no piety himself; or who urges them by his discourses to a pure and holy life, while his own life and morals are dissolute? How can the authority of religion and the honour of the church be sustained in this sceptical and inquiring age, unless its ministers be distinguished by talents which command respect, and by a course of life which proves their integrity? To fill the churches with young men of loose morals, feeble intellect, and dubious piety, who pass its threshold by an act of perjury, affirming that they are moved by the Holy Spirit, is the surest way to divest religion of its proper influence,

and expose the office of its ministers to contempt. This scheme might do in the dark ages of ignorance, when pious frauds answered better than sincerity. But the time is gone by; the age of credulity and superstition is passed; every thing must now be scrutinized and proclaimed; and nothing can stand the test but rectitude and truth. Let none therefore be thrust into the priest's office, but those who are qualified for the honourable and efficient discharge of its sacred functions!

But if the subject of this memoir chose the christian ministry as a sphere of exertion most suited to his talents, his choice was in a great measure determined by the benevolence of his feelings, and a deep sense of religion. A tender sensibility, a native generosity of spirit, a wish to contribute something to the happiness of others, which at first seemed to spring up spontaneously in his bosom, were cherished and confirmed by the discipline of his childhood, and the scenes and examples most familiar to him in youth. He was not taught to consider himself the supreme object of attention, or the gratification of his own wishes the centre of his thoughts. He was not induced to regard his inferiors as beings of a different nature, who had no claim to his kind offices, or in whose

welfare, he had no concern. He was rather led to identify his true interest with the happiness of his connexions and the public good. He was often reminded that all mankind are children of the same parent, members of the same family, heirs of the same changes, mutually dependent, and therefore bound by duty and interest to be mutually beneficial. Knowledge, wealth, and influence, are given to individuals as trusts for the common good, not to pamper a mean and sordid selfishness, but to increase the happiness of their possessors, by exalting their virtue, and enlarging their beneficence. "To weep with those that weep, and to rejoice with them that rejoice," is a duty no less consistent with the order of nature than with the word of truth. In proportion as a man's benevolence is extinguished, and he ceases to make others happy in reality or in hope, the streams of his own enjoyment are dried up, and he becomes a burden or a torment to himself, pining away his miserable existence. But in making others happy, we learn what is meant by true happiness; which flows from a fountain that will never become dry, and is limited, not by externals, but by the taste and capacity of the recipient.

Howard Glenville, imbued with these senti-

ments, learnt to cultivate benevolence as the essence of moral goodness, without which all other virtues, however splendid, are of little value. His natural disposition to do good, nurtured by parental example and encouragement, increased with his mental strength, the enlargement of his knowledge, and the sense he acquired of human suffering. Nothing, indeed, contributed more to this effect than the perusal of history, one of his favourite studies. The folly and wretchedness of the human race, as reflected in the historic mirror, excited his astonishment and pity. The retrospect of those horrors which tyranny and war have occasioned, made so deep an impression on his sensibilities that he sometimes involuntarily burst into tears. The more he knew of mankind, the more he perceived the necessity of some system which shall call forth the agency of benevolence, repel the inroads of evil, and diffuse through society greater means and instruments of good. While many live to no valuable purpose, but are a burden to the community; and while many others are actively employed as the ministers of evil, extending more widely the ravages of the curse; how imperative are the calls of humanity upon the wise and generous to espouse her cause, to arrest

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into tears. The more he knew of mankind, the more he perceived the necessity of some system which should call forth the agency of benevolence, to counteract the wide-spread roads of evil, and diffuse through society the salutary means and instruments of good. Many lives are sacrificed to a valuable purpose, but are a waste of the human faculties; and while many others are devoted to the service of the ministers of evil, extending the reign of the curse; many are employed in the cause of humanity upon the earth, to arrest the progress of the cause, to arrest

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the arm of her oppressors, to avenge her wrongs, and restore the bloom of health and the smile of joy to her countenance!

The desire of contributing something to human happiness, therefore, directed the subject of this memoir more strongly to the sacred office, which he fancied would give the fullest scope to his energies. His recent sorrows also, though they partook more of self-interest, both warmed and expanded his benevolence, and gave him a more vivid perception of human suffering, and the chief antidote designed for its relief. In truth, individual suffering is the cradle of humanity, where its tenderest and most efficient sympathies are cherished and matured. Those who have never known sorrow themselves, are but ill-qualified to appreciate the feelings of the distressed, or to administer the healing balm and the cup of sympathy. But afflictions personally endured, render the heart susceptible of feeling, dispose the eye to weep for the unfortunate, and incline the hand to succour and relieve.

But while these principles and events decided his wavering choice, and directed the energies of his mind to one object, his zeal received a fresh impulse from the discourses of a popular divine

in the neighbourhood, to whose friendship Howard had been recently introduced. His superior talents as a preacher had excited public attention, and drawn around him a crowded auditory. He disclaimed the refinements of elegant composition, and the attractions of an artificial delivery, as beneath the dignity of divine truth. He trusted rather to the force of argument, and the genuine effect of christian principles, presented to the mind with simplicity and affection, than to the beauty of his periods or the melody of his voice. Like the great models of ancient eloquence, he endeavoured at once to convince the judgment and interest the feelings of his auditors, that reason might approve the truth, and the affections rally around it. Though sufficiently calm and dispassionate to fix the attention of philosophic minds, he infused into his discourses a warmth and energy which evinced the sincerity of his persuasions, and the importance of the cause he was pleading. Avoiding those anathemas which serve only to provoke the sceptic and gratify the bigot, he appealed to the scriptures as the inspired test of christian verities, and with all the earnestness of an apostle, commended them to every man's conscience in the sight of God. There was a charm

in his eloquence better felt than defined. It fixed the attention of his hearers upon the subject rather than the preacher, and disposed them to retire meditating on sacred themes, and making a right use of his instructions.

Howard's mind, wounded by his late bereavement, was then in a fit state to receive the full force of these impressions. The effect was indeed powerful. It seemed to awaken the dormant energies of his soul, and presented to his view, in the most vivid imagery, ideas and prospects previously unknown, or but faintly pictured. When he saw these impressive exhibitions of divine truth; when he beheld the listening multitudes, with fixed attention and a feeling heart, charmed with the preacher's eloquence; when he perceived the tear of penitence moisten the eye, and the smile of faith gladden their countenance; when he learnt the moral good resulting from his ministry, and the trophies won to the Saviour's cause; it renewed the energy of his christian zeal, and inspired him with a noble resolution to attain the same excellence. Fresh honours flattered his hopes, and he was eager to stand in the foremost ranks of the profession he had chosen. Ideas of human applause and popular distinction, were now

blended with plans of usefulness and the interests of religion; and the purer motives which first influenced his choice, were henceforth mingled with the common tincture of ambition.

Intending therefore to devote himself to the church, proper arrangements were made for his going to college, and the time appointed for the commencement of his collegiate studies. In the prospect of that event, Howard omitted no opportunity of improving his talents, but with great diligence applied to the different sciences, in which some proficiency would be required. He was anxious to acquit himself at college with propriety and honour, and to insure by his own merit the approbation and confidence of his learned masters.

In these resolutions, so worthy of the youthful mind, he was duly encouraged by his esteemed tutor, Mr. Ward. Having passed through the discipline of a college life himself, he was the better qualified to prepare his pupil for the fiery ordeal to which his talents and virtues would be brought; for the collision of sentiment and character he would have to encounter; for the difficulties to be surmounted in climbing the hill of science; and for the prudent and steady course which uniformly leads to reputation and success. To his young

welfare he had no concern. He was rather led to identify his true interest with the happiness of his connexions and the public good. He was often reminded that all mankind are children of the same parent, members of the same family, heirs of the same changes, mutually dependent, and therefore bound by duty and interest to be mutually beneficial. Knowledge, wealth, and influence, are given to individuals as trusts for the common good, not to pamper a mean and sordid selfishness, but to increase the happiness of their possessors, by exalting their virtue, and enlarging their beneficence. "To weep with those that weep, and to rejoice with them that rejoice," is a duty no less consistent with the order of nature than with the word of truth. In proportion as a man's benevolence is extinguished, and he ceases to make others happy in reality or in hope, the streams of his own enjoyment are dried up, and he becomes a burden or a torment to himself, pining away his miserable existence. But in making others happy, we learn what is meant by true happiness; which flows from a fountain that will never become dry, and is limited, not by externals, but by the taste and capacity of the recipient.

Howard Glenville, imbued with these senti-

ments, learnt to cultivate benevolence as the essence of moral goodness, without which all other virtues, however splendid, are of little value. His natural disposition to do good, nurtured by parental example and encouragement, increased with his mental strength, the enlargement of his knowledge, and the sense he acquired of human suffering. Nothing, indeed, contributed more to this effect than the perusal of history, one of his favourite studies. The folly and wretchedness of the human race, as reflected in the historic mirror, excited his astonishment and pity. The retrospect of those horrors which tyranny and war have occasioned, made so deep an impression on his sensibilities that he sometimes involuntarily burst into tears. The more he knew of mankind, the more he perceived the necessity of some system which shall call forth the agency of benevolence, repel the inroads of evil, and diffuse through society greater means and instruments of good. While many live to no valuable purpose, but are a burden to the community; and while many others are actively employed as the ministers of evil, extending more widely the ravages of the curse; how imperative are the calls of humanity upon the wise and generous to espouse her cause, to arrest

delight of their closing years! And what fears agitate their bosoms, when they perceive the first symptoms of a degenerate course, whose dismal results threaten to bring them with sorrow to the grave! Happy would it be, if youth in general were duly impressed with this circumstance! Its remembrance might have a salutary influence on their proceedings in the outset of life. In the trying and dubious hour, the memory of a parent, or a parent's admonitions and tears, might dissolve the enchanter's spell, divest temptation of its force, renew their wavering resolutions on the side of duty, constrain them to rally around its standard, and by noble perseverance, gain the victory. So thought the subject of this memoir, when he bade adieu to his native home, and imprinted on his heart the hour of separation, as a solemn memento for the future.

The morning of his departure was wet and lowering. Showers had fallen at an early hour, and the clouds still hovered on the adjacent hills. The gloomy aspect of nature, by its effects on the nervous system, heightened the family gloom, and seemed to justify still gloomier forebodings. Mr. Glenville and his son, however, assumed a smile of cheerfulness, as they drove from the Lodge, and

dropped into the ear of their anxious relatives many kind adieus and soothing remembrances. As they followed the circuitous way over hill and dale to the main road, the village scenes, and other objects most familiar to Howard, gradually disappeared. Every field, every hill, every valley, coupled in remembrance with many delightful walks, seemed dearer than ever to his perception, like the last dying looks of a friend. His eye roved with intense interest from object to object, while his feelings still hovered around their home, reluctant to bid adieu to the last scene of its local endearments.

Having passed the scenes which had long been familiar, Howard felt little inclination to observe the beauties of nature, or to give utterance to his thoughts. Past events, and objects long endeared, absorbed his attention. His feelings strongly excited, sought repose in the sanctuary of silence. As tears hidden from the public eye, flow sweetly in retirement; so strong affections love to enjoy themselves unrestrained in the still solitudes of the mind. There memory soon retraced the course of his brief history. Its principal incidents passed in review before him with fresh interest. His reminiscences of the pleasing and painful were

vivid and affecting. And the retrospect, while it touched the tenderest chords of sensibility, excited mingled emotions of gratitude and regret. From the past imagination was carried forward to the future, forming the outlines of his expected course, which hope gilded with magic colours. His busy thoughts planned, and modified, and planned again, a variety of engagements, which weeks and months and years alone could accomplish. Already he fancied himself advancing in his literary career, sustaining the sacred office, and addressing the word of life to listening multitudes. His ideas passed from one object to another swift as the lightning, till the intensity of his feelings was relieved, and the mind restored to its wonted cheerfulness, by the number and variety of its own creations.

Mr. Glenville, having allowed sufficient time for these reveries, called Howard's attention to the surrounding scenery, and endeavoured to beguile away the journey by cheerful and improving conversation. As they ascended the Cotswold hills, the clouds which had rendered the morning so inauspicious, gradually dispersed. The sun shone forth in his meridian splendour, and presented to their view a wide enchanting landscape of hill and

valley, woodland and pasturage, in all the grandeur and luxuriance of autumnal plenty. Nature, refreshed by the morning showers, assumed an aspect of unusual richness and beauty. The fragrance of the fields was delightful. The fruits of agriculture, come to maturity, were abundant. And though the sober tints of autumn were becoming visible, there was a richness still remaining in the verdure which charmed the eye. Even the saddest feelings might have been revived by the brilliance and vivacity of nature, and soothed by the soft melody of the grove. Our travellers therefore, exchanging the gloom of the morning for a cheerful day, pursued their journey with satisfaction, admiring the landscape around them, or recalling some anecdote of former times.

On arriving near Woodstock, Mr. Glenville left the public road, and drove through Blenheim-park, the seat of the Duke of Marlborough, which, for its extent, beauty, and magnificence, has long been the pride of the neighbourhood, and the admiration of strangers. Howard was gratified with a transient view of the palace; and as time forbade them to linger in its apartments, he promised himself the pleasure of another and a longer visit. He had often heard of the fame of

Blenheim-house, as surpassed in grandeur by few, if any, of the noble mansions of Great Britain; and his expectations were in no respect disappointed by the sight. Its external grandeur and interior richness and magnificence, together with the enchanting landscapes presented to the eye as they rode through the park, equalled, if not exceeded, the ideas he had formed. While he admired the sumptuous edifice, as a noble monument of British patriotism and wealth, the luxuriant vegetation around it, excited still greater admiration for the beauty and magnificence of nature.

After leaving Woodstock, the conversation of our travellers naturally turned to the history of the mansion they had been visiting, and the memory of its noble proprietor. It likewise brought to their remembrance the reign of Henry the second, and the story of the fair Rosamond, whose beauty and misfortunes gave celebrity to the labyrinth of Woodstock park, and were identified with the literature of the twelfth century.

“But how many changes,” said Mr. Glenville, “has it undergone since that period? How different the aspect of society and the state of Britain, during the revolution of seven centuries! What proofs has time furnished of the instability of

human grandeur, and the silent oblivion into which former generations have long fallen, or will soon fall! From the total blank which covers the memory of their existence, only a few solitary names are excepted, rendered memorable by the greatness of their achievements or the singularity of their fate. While the names of the fair Rosamond and her royal lover, are coupled with the history of Woodstock park, how many thousands of its visitors, how many of its fair inhabitants, how many of its noble proprietors, through a series of ages, have long since fallen into the oblivion of the grave, leaving no vestige of their transactions, and no memorial of their names!"

"The splendid achievements of the great Marlborough at a more recent period," continued Mr. Glenville, "are still fresh on the page of British history; and have secured to his descendants the magnificent palace we have just seen, with all the honours of his name, and the rank assigned them in society. But who knows any thing of the tens of thousands of brave warriors, by whose prowess the victorious general won his laurels; or of the tens of millions who first deprecated or gloried in his conquests? Thousands won the palm, but one alone bears it! The glory of his achievements still

lives in the classic page. But the people who provoked and sustained the conflict, and whose interests were affected by his success, have long since perished from remembrance. The age of Marlborough, and the victories of Blenheim, Ramilies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet, are still regarded by orators and historians as forming the most splendid epoch in British history. But the glory of those achievements, like most other military triumphs, was little better than an empty vision, and produced no permanent effects, in which virtue and patriotism can find any thing to admire. The victor's wreath, woven by his supporters, and watered with the blood and tears of the vanquished, may long remain fresh and verdant; but the willow, the cypress, and the nightshade, flourish best with the laurel on which it grew."

"I must confess," replied Howard, "that my admiration of the duke of Marlborough and other great warriors, is always checked and limited by a consideration of the miseries of war, and the dubious good resulting from their achievements. It has often struck me, whether the applause bestowed on such characters, and the feelings of self-gratulation and triumph shewn by people in

general when referring to their victories, may not rather be imputed to national pride, or the innate love of superiority common to mankind, than to the justice of the cause in which they were engaged, or to the public advantage arising from their success? Their claims to the gratitude of their co-temporaries and the admiration of posterity, are seldom tried by the principles of justice or philanthropy. Their success is supposed to settle that question, being deemed for the most part, a valid proof of the equity of their cause. The award of honour is generally made in such cases by the influence of patriotism, which is sometimes the essence of selfishness, exciting men for the sake of their country, to perform deeds which level justice with the ground, and outrage the best feelings of humanity. I cannot therefore speak with unqualified applause of military heroes, whose only claim to an honourable remembrance, was the conquest of the sword. Perhaps you will condemn the sentiment; but I feel very differently toward the character and government of the immortal Alfred, whose name is so much identified with the noble University before us. I hope you agree with me in thinking him without exception, if not the greatest and best monarch that ever reigned, at

least the greatest and best that ever swayed the English sceptre."

"Your expressions, perhaps, Howard," rejoined Mr. Glenville, "may require to be a little qualified. But upon the whole, I agree to what you have said, and can never think of Alfred but with the highest admiration and pleasure. He was indeed, in the best sense of the phrase, a great man; great in the excellence of his character, and the usefulness of his reign. His superior qualities appeared no less admirable in the most forlorn state of his affairs, when a fugitive in the island of Athelney, forsaken by his courtiers, than at the head of his victorious armies, rescuing his country from its rapacious invaders, showing clemency to the vanquished, restoring liberty and repose to a ruined people, or presiding in the senate, and enacting laws which secured the administration of justice to all classes, and laid the foundation of their prosperity and improvement through succeeding ages. Even the divisions and sub-divisions of the country, so conducive to the preservation of order and good-policy, are standing memorials of his wise and useful reign. While, indeed, the University, whose edifices appear in sight, founded and enriched by his beneficence, with its influence

on the civilization, literature, and happiness of the nation for a thousand years, will transmit to future generations a noble monument to the memory of Alfred, sufficient doubtless to immortalize his name. Here then we see how much a good king may do for the benefit of his people; and how superior, in the estimate of remote posterity, is the greatness of beneficence, to the greatness of military renown."

While expressing these sentiments, our travellers approached the city, and perceived in the first view of its exterior, objects of sufficient interest to fix their attention. The spacious streets and magnificent colleges, which have long been the admiration of this celebrated place, answered the expectations Howard had formed of its appearance. Nor was the impression at all diminished when they afterwards viewed at leisure the interior of the colleges, and other public edifices devoted to the religion or literature of the country, and adorned with the busts and portraits of illustrious men. Howard congratulated himself on his arrival at a place so auspicious to philosophy and science. As he continued his visits, every object seemed to remind him that he was treading on sacred ground, where, for ten centuries, men of the brightest

talents had pursued their literary career. The monuments of grandeur, genius, and erudition, which every where appeared to his view, humbled the pride and self-flattery of which he was conscious, and made him feel his insignificance in the mental world. But the same objects which produced this impression, at the same time raised his emulation to follow in the same career, directing his whole aim to those acquisitions which constitute the true dignity of the mind.

“Now,” said he to his father, “now I shall obtain the summit of my ambition. I see every thing around me to repress what is evil, to encourage what is good. Already I feel the inspiring effect of college scenery; and the very air seems cheering. If I sink into folly or indolence, the place itself, with all its relics of antiquity, will upbraid me. My companions in study will likewise be distinguished by unaffected piety, suavity of manners, rectitude of conduct, delight in study, and a noble emulation in the pursuit of excellence. Their example will certainly do me good.”

“Well said! well said, Howard!” replied Mr. Glenville, “I wish you may find it so; but I fear you are a little too romantic. You will doubtless have for your associates in study, young gentlemen

of birth and education, who are placed here under the care of revered professors, and expressly devoted to the acquisition of knowledge. Many of them are also destined to be the public guardians of piety and virtue, and the established ministers of religion; and of course, things ought to be as you seem to expect. But I fear you are reckoning without your host. Your ideas of college discipline and college society are too sanguine. If indeed their expansion of mind, sanctity of character, and growth in wisdom, resembled the magnitude of their abodes, the sacredness of their design, and the number of their advantages, it would be something. Your ideas would be more than realized. But I fear, Howard, your sanguine hopes will end in disappointment and disgust. I fear you will witness in many of your colleagues, proofs of indolence, frivolity, dissipation, and irreligion, instead of the opposite qualities. And perhaps, in some cases, the virtues which you have cherished from your birth, and will, I trust, always cherish, may expose you to the ridicule and reproach of graduating divines."

"I have often heard such charges brought against the Oxonians," replied Howard, "but supposed them to be the effect of ill nature. I

cannot doubt, however, but you have too much reason for suggesting these timely cautions, though I would still be reluctant to believe the worst. I would rather be deceived by thinking too favourably of mankind, than make myself a misanthrope, by regarding the greater part of them as knaves or fools."

"You know, my dear Howard," rejoined his father, "that I am no enemy to candour. I approve and commend your liberality of sentiment. But in thinking too favourably of mankind, you stand in greater need of the cautions I have just given. If human nature were differently disposed, or if a mere residence within the precincts of a college would change the minds and controul the passions of young men, your ideas of college society would be correct. But since the reverse of this supposition is true, many irregularities must arise, and many loose characters will be met with, among the inmates of a University so extensive and opulent as this. To expect otherwise would be no less absurd than dangerous. In the best regulated society, many offences will be committed, and many abuses will, in the course of time, take place. And the noblest endowments, designed purely for the public good, will, in many cases, become the occasion or the instruments of its

ruin. What then can you expect here! But I hope your piety and firmness of character will be superior to the influence of corrupt example; and that nothing will seduce you from the path of rectitude and honour, which you have hitherto approved and followed."

Howard was too much affected by these salutary and paternal cautions, to prolong the discussion, though his feelings were in perfect unison with Mr. Glenville's wishes. Facts, however, soon evinced the necessity of circumspection, when the principles he had hitherto deemed sacred, were severely tried, and the purity of his morals exposed to great danger. Where, indeed, can modest virtue pass without insult, or unobtrusive piety escape the scorner's laugh, except it be in the bosom of retirement, or the society of select and kindred minds?

After a few days, Mr. Glenville returned to his family, and Howard began his new course of study. Week after week passed away in the same round of literary engagements, and no event of particular importance transpired. His mind enlarged with his advantages; and his proficiency in classical learning and the mathematics, did honour to his own talents, and received the approbation of

his instructors. Though fond of cheerful society, his acquaintance during the first and second terms, was limited to a small circle, in whose friendship he sometimes relaxed from study, and enjoyed the pleasure of a social evening. Knowing that many were his superiors in talent and learning, he wished to make the best improvement of his time and advantages; and was often encouraged to surmount difficulties in the way of science by many honourable examples among his colleagues, and by the applause justly given to superior merit. These feelings were particularly excited by the display of talent, and the public distribution of literary honours, at the Commemoration which closed the first session. How deep and overwhelming was the impression when he first entered the theatre on that interesting occasion, and beheld its august assembly, which comprised an imposing exhibition of the rank, learning, and beauty of the nation. He was particularly gratified with an essay on Common Sense, and a prize poem on Palestine, which were received with great applause and honourably rewarded. The whole scene was solemn and imposing. To the subject of this memoir, it had all the charms of novelty, mingled with the grandeur of intellect and the influence of public

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esteem. He fancied it was philosophy presiding in her own palace, and bestowing crowns of unfading laurel on her votaries, amidst the admiration of surrounding multitudes. His memory long retained the impression; and though fear shrunk abashed from the firey ordeal, yet he resumed his studies with fresh vigour, resolving that if he should not win the wreath of superior learning, he would at least exonerate himself from the charge of indolence and levity.

Having chosen the sacred profession, Glenville wished to qualify himself for its public duties, and was anxious to make his other attainments subservient to theology. In this respect, however, the method of study pursued in the college to which he belonged, was less extensive and less systematic than he expected. It afterwards appeared to him but ill calculated to furnish the student with those ample stores of theological information, which a proper discharge of the ministerial office, especially in this vain and speculative age, requires. Instead of embracing a complete system of theology, in the course of which, every question, and the opinions of every sect, might be calmly examined, many important branches of inquiry were superficially passed over, or wholly omitted. To

become sound divines, able polemics, or instructive preachers, by such a process was altogether improbable. It was more calculated to become the nursery of sceptics and bigots. Time and experience, it is hoped, have rectified the error, and introduced a system more adapted to the age, and more conducive to a wise and efficient ministry.

In the mean time, Glenville pursued his inquiries with greater freedom, enlarged his course of reading on theological subjects, and examined different questions on their own ground, without regard to the authority of great names, or the influence of antiquity and innovation. Subjects now appeared in a new light, and difficulties started up with a formidable aspect, in those tracks of thought which had hitherto seemed smooth and easy. Objections to established truths, which had often been refuted, arose in his inquiries, with all the interest and force of novelty. Doubts often appeared instead of evidence, and obscurity where he looked for demonstration; so that he felt himself embarrassed in those perceptions of things, which had formerly appeared most luminous and convincing. The more he read and thought, the more remote he seemed to be from the end of his inquiries; and the theory of one day was often scattered by the next day's thoughts.

Had Glenville pursued his inquiries with patience and firmness, as well as the love of truth, these difficulties might have been encountered without danger, and his judgment respecting them confirmed by solid and invincible evidence. But though he desired to find out truth, and was impartial in his attention to different arguments, his state of mind was too precipitate and yielding. Plausible objections, however fallacious, had too much effect upon him ; and the conclusions he had formed one day, were shaken or set aside the next, by some shrewd objection which seemed unanswerable. He had not patience sufficient to unweave the web which sophistry had woven, or to untie the gordian knot of ingenious controversy ; and in attempting, like the Macedonian hero, to decide the question by a single stroke, he defeated his own object, and supplied materials for another difficulty. But habits of speculation are seldom favourable to piety, even though theology in its most interesting discoveries be the subject of discussion. sacred themes must be studied in a right spirit, in the spirit of humility and prayer, to leave on the student's mind a right impression. The flame of devotion may languish and expire under the elements designed for its preservation, when those

elements are improperly applied. Glenville was not insensible of this danger, nor entirely unconcerned for its removal; although the decline of religion in its personal influence, is for the most part a malady which feels not its own weakness, nor seeks in earnest its own cure. To some of his experienced friends, the symptoms of declining piety appeared more alarming. His company and conversation during the recess from college pursuits, were always gratifying to his early connexions and long endeared friends. But the pleasure it afforded was in some cases impaired by the rash expression of eccentric ideas, vague notions, and a latent undefined scepticism.

CHAP. IV.

DURING one of the vacations, Glenville spent some days with a family in the immediate vicinity, named Randolph, with whom his parents had for many years maintained a warm and disinterested friendship, in which he was also desirous to share.

Mr. Randolph's residence was a handsome and commodious edifice, situated on a pleasant elevation, embosomed in verdant lawns and fragrant plantations, and surrounded with rich and delightful scenery. Behind it rose the gentle slopes of Bredden hill, adorned with hanging woods and fertile pasturage. In front were seen the lofty ridges of the Malvern, rising from the valley to the clouds, bounding the western horizon, and inclosing a wide extent of well-cultivated country. Its groves and meadows were watered by the Avon, whose classic stream was seen gliding in serpentine movements towards its confluence with the Severn,

the distant expanse of which, visible at intervals, widened and beautified the landscape. And to crown the whole, the richness and serenity of its appearance, were a true emblem of the moral worth and domestic happiness of its inhabitants.

Mr. Randolph was a gentleman of good education and amiable manners, who lived on a valuable estate transmitted to him from his ancestors. He was a man of considerable reading and information, and possessed a correct taste, a sound judgment, a refined sensibility, and a benevolent heart, combined with the faith and piety of a christian. Though he was far from indulging a parsimonious spirit, he disliked the ostentation of modern times, and preferred the easy, unassuming, and ingenuous hospitality of rural life. From his earliest youth he had cherished a strong predilection for the rational enjoyments of domestic society; and was never so much in his element as when seated in the bosom of his family, or surrounded by a few confidential and enlightened friends.

Mrs. Randolph was an exact counterpart of her affectionate husband, and never were two persons more happily united. Their attachment was the spontaneous effect of an early acquaintance, approved and cherished by the frequent and cordial

intercourse subsisting between their families. The pure flame of mutual affection, first kindled at the altar of each other's virtues, was afterwards sustained by a congeniality of taste and sentiment mutually cherished. By an intimacy of some years' continuance, they obtained a complete knowledge of each other's character and disposition, and discovered to their mutual satisfaction, those virtues which best secure the happiness of the married. They hoped to find in each other a suitable companion and a tender friend, always ready to soothe in trouble, and advise in difficulties; and their expectations were as well founded as they were pleasing.

Nothing could be more auspicious than the solemnization of their union: The joy felt on that interesting occasion was not the effervescence of an extraordinary excitement which may soon subside, but the calm and dignified enjoyment of a warm and indissoluble friendship. Their pleasure flowed from sources which adversity cannot alter, nor time exhaust. Year after year confirmed the wisdom of their choice, and diffused around them those rational and refined pleasures of conjugal society, which have no existence in many cases, but in the visions of hope. They were

deeply sensible that human infirmity often impaired the strength and marred the pleasure of their fairest virtues, and proved the present to be a state of trial and improvement, and not of unmingled happiness. But the love which intertwined their interests, drew the veil of sympathy over unavoidable defects, and by greater assiduity and tenderness strengthened their attachment, and rendered their society permanently endearing. The lapse of time, and the increase of domestic anxieties, neither lessened their esteem, nor impaired their felicity. And though personal charms, so fascinating in youth, might begin to fade, the richer ornaments and treasures of the mind, instead of yielding to decay, were refined by experience, and would still be improving. In short, the conjugal happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Randolph was founded on the solid basis of affection and piety, and supported by unchanging fidelity and esteem. It could therefore yield only to the power of the last enemy, and then be renewed and consummated in a superior world!

In discharging their secular and social duties, encompassed by a circle of pleasant friends, Mr. and Mrs. Randolph never lost sight of their responsibility as christian parents, nor suffered

objects of inferior interest to supersede its claims. To imbue the minds of their children with noble sentiments, and train them up to virtue and piety in this life, and a state of immortal happiness in the life to come, were objects of deep and habitual concern, which they laboured with unwearied diligence to effect. The claims of society and the precepts of religion, in conjunction with their own feelings, impelled them to those means of juvenile instruction which, under God, might render their offspring a blessing to the community and an ornament to the christian faith.

At the time of which we are speaking, most of their children had survived the dangers of infancy, and were advancing to an age which requires the most efficient use of parental wisdom, when their virtues begin to bloom, and their society becomes more interesting and rational. Their two eldest, Lavinia and Eliza, were nearly of age, and by the excellence of their disposition evinced the good effects of christian instruction. Their accomplishments, natural and acquired, afforded Mr. and Mrs. Randolph the purest satisfaction, and were a sure presage of their future happiness.

Miss Randolph, in particular, possessed an ample share of those qualities which are reckoned

most essential to female excellence. Her personal attractions, which nature had bestowed with a liberal hand, were equalled by the superior and more lasting attractions of the mind; consisting, not in superficial attainments which are of little use, but in valuable knowledge, sound principles, amiable dispositions, and pleasing manners. These excellent features of character were not marred, as in many cases, by affectation or caprice; but she was easy and unassuming in her demeanour, and by the unaffected modesty and undissembled sincerity of her manners, gave an additional lustre to the elegance of her person, and the superiority of her mind.

The fond parents of Lavinia, while they derived much pleasure from her dutiful and affectionate behaviour, observed these qualifications with delight, and were anxious that her future happiness in the conjugal relation might be commensurate to her worth. Their thoughts were, in fact, often directed to the subject of this memoir; and a secret wish had been long cherished by both families, that their friendship might be prolonged and endeared by the union of Howard with Lavinia; though, at the same time, it was determined to leave the wished-for event to their own choice, and the wise arrangements of divine providence.

Howard had often heard Lavinia spoken of by their mutual friends in the most handsome terms. But in consequence of receiving her education at a distance, and other causes of absence, several years had elapsed since he enjoyed the pleasure of her company. A strong desire of another interview had however been more than once excited by the idea he had formed of her accomplishments. And as this desire had not been repelled by any other attachment, it may be supposed to have prepared his mind for a stronger and more tender impression. The company of Lavinia, who had just returned from Devonshire, gave therefore an extraordinary interest to his present visit at Mr. Randolph's, and led to results of some consequence to both families. Her person and manners exactly corresponded with the ideas he had formed of female excellence. Every hour spent in her society convinced him she had not been extolled by her friends in vain. The longer he conversed with her, the more he discovered indications of a congenial mind. The generous and enlightened sentiments she expressed on various subjects, filled him with delight, and induced him for the first time to regret the necessity of his speedy return to college.

In the course of the last evening, Howard expressed the high gratification he had felt in observing the harmony and happiness of Mr. Randolph's family; of which, he was afraid, there were few examples. Mr. and Mrs. Glenville, and others of the party, joined in the same expressions; when the comparative happiness of the married state, a theme always pleasing to old and young, naturally became the the subject of discussion. A question having been proposed, with respect to the moral design and relative influence of this union, the following conversation took place.

"I should conceive," said Howard, "that the institution of marriage, as a moral union, was designed by the all-wise and beneficent Creator, to enhance the enjoyments and mitigate the sorrows of life, by giving to our sympathies and friendships a degree of perpetuity and tenderness, which in the common intercourses of society can rarely, if ever, be attained."

"Whether we advert to the constitution of nature, or to the law of God, on this subject," replied Mr. Randolph, "your idea respecting it appears to be correct. He who best knew our nature has said, 'It is not good for man to be alone.' Our feelings instinctively recoil from per-

petual solitude, and turn to the benign and friendly intercourses of life as the only state in which it is possible to be happy. But the clashing interests of different individuals, and the various disappointments and changes to which all are liable, annoy the pleasures of society, and render its warmest and steadiest friendships imperfect and unsatisfying. But the institution of marriage is designed to unite the interests of two individuals in the closest manner, that their sympathies and affections, instead of being separated by different and opposing claims, may centre in the same point, be fixed on the same objects, and uniformly directed to the same means. This important consideration, joined with the natural affection of the sexes, and the influence of parental care, must be calculated to refine and perpetuate the friendships of the married, and raise their happiness to the highest degree of which our nature is now capable. Marriage, therefore, when it is entered into and maintained according to the obvious design and express law of our Creator, will insure the largest portion both of private enjoyment and public good. It manifests the divine wisdom and goodness in the constitution of society, and ought to be regarded as a sacred appointment, which none can violate with innocence or impunity."

“But if the married state be so favourable to happiness,” said Miss Randolph, “from what causes does it happen that so many of those who have chosen that state are exceedingly unhappy? For though,” added she, addressing her beloved parents, “the flow of your affection and felicity has been uninterrupted, are there not many instances of a very different description, in which connexions that were deemed promising, have been followed by mutual disappointment and neglect? So prevalent, indeed, are these conjugal infelicities supposed to be, that I have heard several judicious persons question the benevolence of the institution, and speak of it as a source of trial, and not of happiness. It would, then, be desirable to ascertain whether these infelicities, if they prevail to the extent supposed, arise from the unavoidable imperfections of our nature, or from other causes which most persons might prevent or remove.”

“From the little intercourse, I have had with society,” said Howard, pleased with Lavinia’s remark, “I fear there are too many reasons for believing that such infelicities exist; and I have sometimes proposed to myself the same inquiries, and endeavoured to find a satisfactory solution. I should therefore be glad, if Mr. Randolph

would favour us with his opinion on the subject, as my own ideas, derived solely from observation, might, perhaps, appear ridiculous to persons who have made trial of this state. And on this point at least, it behoves me to retain the character of a simple uninformed catechumen."

But Mr. Randolph, wishing to elicit his young friend's opinion, declined acceding to his request, and urged him to proceed with the discussion, and favour them with a solution of the difficulties proposed by Lavinia. Howard with some reluctance yielded to the proposal; but resolved, at the same time, that he would merely state the principal causes to which he thought conjugal infelicity might be ascribed, hoping that Mr. Randolph and other friends would more fully elucidate the question.

"By the little observation I have been able to make on the subject," added he, "it seems to me that many persons are extremely unhappy in the married state, because they were forced into connexions against their own choice, or commenced them voluntarily from sordid motives, and not from the influence of a rational and reciprocal esteem. Others review their union with regret, because they matched themselves with unsuitable

companions, in a precipitate, heedless, or clandestine manner, or because they indulged expectations of happiness which no human virtue could authorize, and which nothing but juvenile ardour and inexperience could excuse. Many of the best formed alliances are sometimes changed into sources of the bitterest sorrow, by inconstancy and cruel neglect on one side, or by strange inattention or suspicious levity on the other. Some even honest and pious people are known to render each other miserable in the extreme, by indulging cross tempers, or by an obstinate uncharitable adherence to different modes of religion. Many also mar the happiness their union might otherwise afford, by wishing to exercise unreasonable authority; in which respect, I presume, even the ladies are not quite innocent. We may likewise add, the want of an open and unreserved confidence in every thing that concerns their mutual interests, aggravated by the absence of true religion, whose salutary influence, if duly felt, would soften the asperities, and improve the endearments, of life. To these causes, it appears to me, the greatest number of unhappy matches may be ascribed; which, instead of resulting from the unavoidable arrangements of nature and providence, originate in the

perverseness of mankind themselves, and might easily be removed or diminished by mutual candour, prudence, self-government, and genuine religion."

"Truly, my good friend," said Mr. Randolph, "you have formed as correct a view of the subject, as though you had actually entered into the marriage state, and were encircled like myself with a blooming family, whom you were desirous to preserve from prevailing errors. But, without joking, I think you have stated the matter in its proper light. Hence, how many alliances are formed, merely to retrieve the difficulties of an embarrassed fortune, or to gratify the whims of parental pride and ambition? How many juvenile pairs, mutually pleased at some transient interview, but entirely unacquainted with each other's character, hastily advance to the hymeneal altar, and with thoughtless temerity offer up vows of reciprocal fidelity and unalterable esteem! No wonder the union of such ill-matched lovers, commenced in the absence of wisdom and friendship, is soon transformed into bitterness and disgust; and the hour that witnessed the solemnization of their nuptials, classed in remembrance with their chief misfortunes! Hence, the daily intercourse of many ill-wedded companions, instead of yielding the pleasure they had hoped for,

gradually unfolds their respective characters, and too late, alas! makes those discoveries which evince their folly, and condemn the ill-fated connexions they have formed. No congeniality of thought and feeling; no interchange of tender sympathies; no endearments of a warm and established friendship; no sources of mutual satisfaction, impart a zest to their social hours. Not finding in each other the suitableness of disposition and manners they expected, the keen sting of disappointment wounds their affections, and poisons their domestic intercourse. Dissatisfied with each other, they employ the language of rebuke, and by ill-timed reflections and severe sarcasms, increase their irritation and regret. These mutual recriminations soon produce mischievous effects, and either end in a speedy separation for life, or compel them to live in perpetual discord and mutual disgust. Thus many who reside in the same habitation, apparently within reach of happiness, by daily tantalizing one another, become reciprocal tormentors."

"Your illustrations of the fact in question, are, I believe, perfectly correct," observed Mrs. Randolph. "But I cannot help thinking that many of the miseries endured by married people, origi-

nate in causes still more trivial than those you have named, and for which both sexes deserve equal censure. For a profligate husband, indeed, no apology can be made. His conduct demands unqualified reprobation. The tenderest assiduities of female affection are tried in vain, to counteract the malignant consequences of his depravity. His infidelity to the marriage vow must inevitably destroy the confidence, if not extinguish the last spark, of connubial love. For his unhappy wife nothing is left but to drink the bitter dregs of the cup of misery. All her prospects of nuptial felicity are blasted. The present is full of anguish, the past of regret, and the future of despair. And though affection, so blind is love! may still cling to the image of her deserter, it can only serve to render the misery she endures more exquisite and tormenting. But," continued she, "when a man of good principles and a benevolent heart, fails in the kindness and attention due to his wife, it may generally be deemed the consequence of her own mismanagement and neglect. When a woman of engaging manners and a well-informed mind, is wedded to a gentleman of this character, I am apt to think, her influence cannot fail to secure all she can reasonably wish. Affection will invent a

fashionable pleasures supersedes the culture of the mind; when excessive complaisance to transient friends interrupts the claims of their husbands and families; how can it surprise us that even affectionate husbands become dissatisfied, and by degrees feel that indifference which soon leads to animosity and disgust? I am willing to confess that the unhappiness we have been speaking of, results in the greatest number of instances from the palpable misconduct of my own sex. But I still think the ladies must take some share of the blame to themselves, and in many cases have the best remedy in their own possession."

"Your opinion, my dear," replied Mrs. Glenville, "is incontestibly true. A man of polished taste and cultivated manners is necessarily disgusted with ignorance, meanness, and frivolity, wherever they appear. It is impossible for him to find pleasure in the company of persons destitute of understanding and refinement, however beautifully adorned. Should a gentleman of this description, through the freakishness of love, happen to marry a woman of low taste and vulgar manners, his attachment will soon be impaired, and his ill-founded hopes disappointed. His prudence and affection may be exerted toward the object of his choice,

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with a view to rectify those obliquities of taste and manners which threaten to extinguish their nuptial happiness. But if all his efforts prove useless, and she still persists in low frivolities and offensive habits, his love, however ardent, will languish, and his confidence, though at first unlimited, will decline. But when good sense," continued she, "is combined with engaging manners, and a desire to make each other happy is sincere and habitual, the affection and felicity of those who enter a state of wedlock from mutual choice, may easily surmount little difficulties, and continue through life steady and unchanged. If both sexes would act upon these principles, the infelicities complained of would be diminished, and the endearments of wedded love would be permanent. Libertines would cease to reprobate the law of marriage, and impudent profligates would submit to its just and reasonable control."

"In the truth and importance of these sentiments, my dear friend, I entirely acquiesce," said Mr. Randolph; "and I think all the company must be of the same opinion. In the present mixed and imperfect state of being, it would be folly to expect, even from the best and purest of our relationships, those high attainments in virtue

advancing. And having spent several most happy days in her society, he took his leave of the family with much reluctance at a late hour, half-resolving to defer his return to college a month or two longer. But a little reflection, mingled, perhaps with some portion of pride, in some degree controlled those feelings, and induced him to think the sudden procrastination of his journey, after making specific arrangements for it, would expose him to the censure and ridicule of his friends. His better judgment likewise intimated, that it would be improper to communicate his wishes to Lavinia, till their acquaintance had become more intimate, and he had duly considered the consequences of so important a measure. At all events, he thought it would be better to avow his attachment by letter, in which he could express himself more freely and explicitly, than a verbal declaration of his feelings would permit; while it would evince greater delicacy and respect toward Lavinia.

But the impression her excellence had made on his affections was too deep to be easily obliterated, and his desire to gain her confidence too strong to be restrained by these prudential calculations. Her image was constantly before him; and the idea, though in itself pleasing, diminished the

satisfaction with which he was going to renew his collegiate studies. But he flattered himself that Lavinia would accept his overtures; while the intimacy of the families left him no reason to doubt Mr. Randolph's concurrence.

In these hopes Glenville was not disappointed. His letters were favourably received, and from his next interview with Lavinia, he assured himself the attachment was reciprocal. Their plan of correspondence was soon arranged, and for a long time afforded them mutual satisfaction, and justified the opinion they had formed of each other's character.

CHAP. V.

BUT as the time advanced for Glenville to leave college, and assume the profession he had chosen, difficulties arose, which at first unsettled, and then changed, his determination. Conceiving it to be his duty to understand and approve the constitution of the church, before he became one of its ostensible defenders, he accordingly commenced a course of reading on the subject. Having traced the history of the church of Christ, from the Acts of the Apostles, and the first three centuries, through the long reign of the papal hierarchy, he proceeded to examine the history of the Reformation, and the manner in which the established religion was reformed in this country. This led him to a comparative view of the different churches, and in the end to a divine revelation of the true church, and the true mission of the church of Christ.

The subject, as he pursued his inquiries, appeared infinitely more difficult than he supposed. The controversy had in some respects an ill effect on his religious views, as it displayed the bad spirit of the christian world, and the uncertainty of its institutions. It tended to produce an unsettled state of feeling with regard to the entire system of theology; and raised a variety of doubts on subjects which before had seemed unquestionable. His objections to the established church at length became so numerous and formidable, that to enrol himself among its ministers, while those doubts remained, appeared like sacrificing his comfort and his honesty. He was anxious to determine otherwise; but having read the works of its eminent defenders with little satisfaction, and detesting the idea of subscribing to its articles of hypocrisy, he relinquished his design, and directed his attention to the bar. Having therefore gone through an ordinary course of collegiate education, and obtained a degree, he left his studies with mingled pleasure and best wishes. He commenced a determination

no less honourable to himself than gratifying to his friends. He applied with great diligence to the attainment of legal knowledge, and allowed himself but little time for recreation. Having letters of introduction to some respectable families in town, he was occasionally prevailed upon to relax from his engagements, and enjoy the pleasures of a social evening, though for several months he was sparing of their enjoyment. His conduct was exemplary, and his manners won the affection of his friends. The cheerfulness of his disposition, and his fluency and good sense in conversation, rendered his company agreeable; and the more he was known, the more his society was courted. Being considered a young man of good family, superior talents, and amiable manners, opportunities were not wanting to enlarge the circle of his acquaintance, and gratify the sociality of his spirit.

For sometime, however, he withstood these inducements to relaxation, and paid more respect to dry books of law, than to the charms of fascinating company. But having conquered some of the most knotty points, and obtained the reputation of promising abilities, he ventured to indulge his taste for society, and the cheerfulness of his disposition, in various pleasures. But the olive of pro-

ferred friendship became his snare. Conscious of his own integrity, he was pleased with the ingenuousness of others. The crafty took advantage of his simplicity, and imposed upon his innocence. Detesting a suspicious temper, he too easily resigned himself to the confidence of people whose pretensions were fallacious, and whose friendship, if sincere, could add nothing to his respectability and happiness.

During his second year in the metropolis, Glenville began to form an intimate acquaintance with several young men of the same profession, who bore the character of freethinkers, and were known to be sceptical, if not antichristian, in their views. The principal of these was Charles Mortimer, a young man of eccentric habits, lively wit, and fascinating conversation. Some slight acquaintance had subsisted between them during the former terms, and many efforts were made on their part to conciliate his esteem. But a sense of religion, and the strong conviction he then felt, of the folly and danger of scepticism, induced him for some time to decline their society. Their flattering attentions, however, tended to remove his prejudices; and he thought it impossible to avoid an occasional interview, without being chargeable with incivility.

His mind, indeed, was too easily wrought upon, wholly to repel their kind offices, although his better judgment condemned the first approaches to so dangerous an intimacy. But the unsettled state of his own views, respecting some points on which he had previously begun to speculate, in some degree lessened his reluctance, and gradually reconciled him to the conversation and speculative habits of the freethinkers.

If his faith in the gospel had already passed the fiery ordeal of a rational inquiry, and if his views of its peculiar doctrines had been the result of a calm and comprehensive investigation, there would have been less danger in the acquaintance. He might then have indulged the hope, perhaps, that his intercourse with such characters, instead of injuring himself, might become the means of arresting their eccentric course, and of restoring them to the order and influence of the gospel. But for this task he was wholly unqualified. The vagueness of his own theology prepared him rather to follow than to resist the fascinations of a shrewd and ingenious sophistry. By forming this acquaintance, he therefore at length fell into the snare against which his best friends had carefully warned him. Its influence on his modes of think-

ing was pernicious, producing a train of consequences which embittered several years of his future life.

Charles Mortimer, his more intimate companion, of whom we shall have further occasion to speak in these memoirs, was the son of a pious and respectable clergyman, who had taken considerable pains with his education. But after leaving home, and residing some time in the metropolis, he had thrown off the restraints of religion, and pursued a life of gaiety and dissipation. He had likewise embraced the infidel philosophy of the Gallic school, and was zealous, though subtle and cautious, in propagating his sceptical opinions. In his private circles, he not only ridiculed the common orthodoxy of the church, but endeavoured to undermine the first principles of morality and religion. He likewise introduced his favourite topics and profane jests in every company, where he could do so without risking his reputation too far, or exposing himself to the censure of his friends.

Sometimes he espoused the sceptical philosophy of modern freethinkers, under pretence of shewing how triumphantly the christian advocate might refute their arguments, and silence their objections.

But he generally took care to leave the principal points unanswered; and to intimate how strongly these difficulties affected his own judgment; what doubts they excited with regard to the christian faith; and how anxious he was that some experienced friend would assist him in removing them. In these discussions he displayed considerable sophistry and wit, accompanied with great fluency and an insinuating address. Few persons among his acquaintance appeared skilful enough to silence his objections, or confute his reasoning; while perhaps, the weakness of their own faith indisposed them to make the attempt. Many of his colleagues became an easy prey to his seductions, and embarked with him in the cause of unbelief and profligacy.

Mortimer had often noticed the fluency and spirit displayed by the subject of this memoir, in defending the christian doctrine against the bitter sarcasms of its opponents. Pleased also with his ingenuous manners, he marked him out as a fit champion to engage with in philosophic combat, and already flattered his own pride and infidelity with the speedy overthrow of his faith. For this purpose he addressed himself to Glenville with unusual respect; and on all occasions courted his

company and friendship in the most affable and engaging manner. Sometimes he complimented his talents and firmness, and expressed his solicitude to be convinced of the truth and excellence of revealed religion, by a candid review of the evidences which had rendered the faith of his friend so steady and immovable.

Glenville, yielding too readily to the benevolence and integrity of his own mind, reposed an unsuspecting confidence in the candour and sincerity of Mortimer. Every day increased their familiarity; while their leisure hours and private walks were employed in the discussion of doubtful points and philosophic theories. By this intercourse Mortimer soon perceived that his friend's acquaintance with controversial theology was more limited than he imagined. He also perceived that his faith in the gospel resulted rather from a partial view of its general evidences, than from a profound and comprehensive examination of the various arguments by which its claims have been supported and opposed. He therefore assailed his belief at those points which his limited information less qualified him to defend. By various artful insinuations, he contrived to awaken doubts and suspicions on many important subjects, which gradually diminished

the strength of his persuasions, and produced a susceptibility of disbelief, which the other knew how to improve. Sometimes he modestly assumed the manners of a pupil, and stated his objections and difficulties like one who was anxious to be informed. But in doing so, he excited in the breast of Glenville a stronger propensity to scepticism and unbelief; which, by its gradual operation on his judgment, soon prepared him to hear without disgust, an open avowal of infidelity, or a bold renunciation of the christian faith. Even his ingenuousness of spirit, not being fortified against error by sufficient knowledge and resolution, hastened this unhappy change in his opinions, and became accessary to his ruin. Mortimer secretly gloried in his success, and fancied he should soon find in Glenville an able defender of the same principles, and a cheerful companion in the same course of criminal dissipation and vain pleasures.

Mortimer and his colleagues had for some time formed among themselves a kind of club, or society of freethinkers, as they called it, for the discussion of curious and knotty questions in divinity. It was the avowed object of their meetings to encourage a calm and unbiassed inquiry after truth, with a view to obviate the doubts and difficulties

which surround the gospel. But it was their real design to cherish habits of scepticism, to undermine the credibility of revealed truth, to increase the number of their abettors, and to embolden themselves in a fearless and undisguised avowal of infidelity. For this purpose, all the cavils and reasonings against christianity, which its most subtle impugnors have been able to adduce, were brought forward, and embellished with all the wit and raillery they could muster. The long-forgotten arguments of Celsus, Porphyry, Julian, and other noted enemies of the gospel in the earlier periods of its history, were rescued from the dust of ages, and exhibited in a new dress. Some drew their objections from the musty volumes of Hobbes, Toland, Collins, Shaftesbury, and Lord Herbert. Others supplied themselves with ample funds of sophistry from the works of Tindal, Morgan, Hume, Bolingbroke, Gibbon, and other freethinkers of less note. Some electrified the meeting with profound trains of reasoning, and splendid sallies of wit, drawn into pure English, from the writings of Volney, Helvetius, Voltaire, and Rousseau. The French Encyclopedists were also held in requisition to support these enlightened freethinkers, in their chivalrous at-

tempt to emancipate reason from the iron grasp of credulity and superstition. Animated by this formidable array of great men, the boast of philosophy, and the pride of ages, doubtless! they proceeded without fear to make an assault on the citadel of christian verity, and like many of their predecessors and followers in the same enterprize, already triumphed in the overthrow of its strength.

Glenville, after repeated solicitation, and some conflict in his own breast, was prevailed upon to attend the meetings of Mortimer and his fraternity. At his first introduction, he was received by the company with marked respect, and agreed to have his name enrolled as a member of the club. But though he was become a freethinker, he secretly resolved to make a right use of his thoughts, and "to do nothing against the truth, but for the truth."

The subject announced for discussion, was the importance of free inquiry, and the right of all parties to publish their opinions unrestrained by the civil power. After the question had been proposed, with some remarks by the chairman, it was contended by the different speakers, that all theological subjects should be freely canvassed; that unrestrained liberty in the avowal of his

opinions, was every man's birth right; that the world had been shamefully imposed on by the enemies of free discussion; that the christian church had always been averse to mental liberty; that pains and penalties were still inflicted on those who opposed the national religion; and that nothing was required to insure the triumph of reason over superstition, but the repeal of these abominable laws. If the advocates of the national faith were convinced of the soundness of their cause, and believed it could stand alone on the ground of argument, they would never resort to the civil power, nor attempt to silence their opponents by fine and imprisonment. The very existence of such laws in a country like this, was a plain proof that the ministers of religion well knew the weakness of its foundation, and were conscious that it must soon fall, were it not for the authority of the magistrate and the rich emoluments allowed for its support. In what respect, therefore, did christianity differ from mahomedanism and other notorious impostures, upheld in despotic states by the same means?

These arguments being approved by the meeting, Glenville rose to say a few things in reply. He was a decided friend to liberty of conscience, and

would yield to no man in his detestation of intolerant laws and an intolerant spirit. He unreservedly condemned the use of pains and penalties in silencing the abettors of anti-christian opinions; and thought the defence of our national religion, instead of being assigned to the attorney-general in a court of law, should be left to its own ministers, whose numbers and talents were surely adequate to the task. He believed that state prosecutions for error and blasphemy, were no less pernicious than unjust; and that the only legitimate weapons a christian could use in defending the christian doctrine, were those of reason, charity, and truth. But he denied the inference which had been drawn from the intolerance of christian churches to the discredit of christianity itself; which, he believed, neither required nor admitted such means of defence. Besides, it was well known that christianity was espoused by men of the greatest minds and the warmest attachment to liberty of conscience, who could have no motive for so espousing it, but their own conviction of its truth and importance as a divine system. Inquirers after truth should therefore scorn to use so unfair an argument.

This speech was received with much applause,

and his friend Mortimer, the chairman, complimented him on the liberality of his sentiments, and the clearness of his reasoning. If all christian advocates were like him, they must at least think favourably of the cause, though its evidences might not afford them entire satisfaction. They hoped he would not fail, therefore, to attend their meetings, and grant them his most able assistance in their researches after truth.—Flattered by this compliment, and pleased with the hope of doing them good, Glenville felt little reluctance in acceding to their wishes.

The subject discussed at the next meeting was, the mysteriousness of the doctrines peculiar to christianity, and the different and irreconcilable opinions entertained respecting them by the christian world. The points principally aimed at in this question were, the doctrine of the trinity, the incarnation of Christ, the atonement, predestination, the influence of the Spirit, satanic agency, a particular providence, the resurrection of the dead, and the eternity of future punishment. The views which different sects hold concerning these doctrines were described in the most objectionable and repulsive terms, so as to excite the mirth, and call forth the witty sarcasms of the meeting. The

speakers, having drawn their opponents in broad caricature, felt little difficulty in exposing them to ridicule and contempt. "Strange revelation must that be," said they, "which contains nothing but inexplicable mysteries! a fine test of truth, which nobody can understand! a blessed directory of faith and morals, which produces among its votaries endless controversy! a glorious church universal, consisting of motley sects and hostile parties, among whom there is scarcely a point of union or resemblance! Surely these christians should come to some agreement among themselves, what they mean by christianity, before they persecute déists for rejecting so many indefinite crudities! Surely it is wiser to have no faith but the faith of free-thinkers, than to embrace a creed which its advocates themselves, judging from their dissensions, can neither define nor understand!"

Glenville was vexed at this farrago, and wondered that arguments so unfair and contemptible, should be approved by persons of so much intelligence and good sense. He therefore rose to reply with more warmth than usual, and shewed the absurdity and injustice of identifying with christianity itself, the vague notions of christian sects, and the caricatures of orthodox opinions, unless

they were defined in scripture language. It was cowardly to contend with a man of straw, dressed up for the occasion, to make the triumph appear easy. But if the doctrines in question were calmly considered on their own ground, as stated in the sacred volume, he thought the mystery which surrounds them would be diminished, the clashing views of different sects in a great measure reconciled, and many of the objections adduced that evening, lessened or removed. At all events, the absurdities of christian divines could never justify their rejection of the gospel, unless those absurdities were actually contained in the new testament.

The chairman artfully acknowledged the force of this reasoning, and the necessity of being candid and cautious in their discussions. But the doctrines in question, he said, were allowed on all hands, to be the essentials of christianity, and must therefore stand or fall with it as a divine system. Their vague and mysterious character was also rendered unquestionable by the very existence and prevalence of different sects and opinions. But the main difficulty arose from admitting the plenary inspiration of the scriptures, and the consequent authority of every book, paragraph, and text; for which he thought there was neither

nature of the gospel, the humble character of its apostles, the systematic opposition they encountered, the total absence of civil patronage and all ordinary means of success, rendered the rapid progress of christianity in its early triumphs over the deep-rooted superstitions, depraved morals, philosophic prejudices, and fierce intolerance of the Roman world, a case altogether unparalleled in the annals of human history, not to be accounted for upon the known principles of mental operation, unless its miraculous origin and evidences be admitted. Had he set this argument in its proper light, the confident assertions of the meeting would have been silenced, and the cause of truth in some measure rescued from derision. But his own faith was then too much shaken, and the influence of scepticism too strong, for him to become a decided and efficient advocate.

At some following meetings, they proposed to examine certain objectionable parts of the Old Testament, particularly the slaughter of the Midianites, the conquest of Canaan, the destruction of the Amalekites, and other brief narratives and insulated expressions, which have long been regarded as fit subjects of sceptical raillery and abuse. The pretensions to inspiration set up by the

founders of most religious systems, from the books of the Sybils, the oracles of pagan mythology, the shasters of Hinduism, the koran of Mahomed, down to the dreams of Baron Swedenborg, and other enthusiasts, were likewise brought forward as a burlesque on the assumption of divine authority, shewing that the writers of the old and new testament were, on this account, liable to just suspicion. And as a divine revelation is itself a miracle, confirmed by a series of miraculous events, they took care not to omit Hume's famous objection to the credibility of a miracle, though ratified by the clearest testimony, since it is contrary to the course of human experience, has never happened to ourselves, and is therefore philosophically absurd and incredible. But if a revelation were possible, they questioned its reasonableness and probability on the part of divine providence. If God made the moral system right at the beginning, what necessity could there be for supernatural interpositions? But if reason, as it is, were deemed insufficient for our direction, they thought it more likely that God should strengthen our reasoning faculty, or reveal himself to each person in particular, than employ the doubtful medium of a verbal and written testimony. They came at last, there-

incredibility of a miracle, Glenville might have shown it to be one of the most complete examples of the *petitio principii*, found in the annals of controversy. It is in fact a doubtful hypothesis, drawn from his own experience, to negative a series of facts confirmed by historical testimony and the experience of past ages. And if admitted in its full extent, as a legitimate ground of argument, it would destroy the faith of history, involve the world in universal scepticism, and confine every man's knowledge within the narrow limits of his own experience. He should, therefore, have called to his assistance the inductive philosophy of the immortal Bacon, the only philosophy worth having; and by a series of facts rising to moral certainty, refuted their assumptions, and proved the unimpeached and unimpeachable veracity of the christian doctrine.

But the doubts which first inclined the subject of this memoir to join the freethinkers, strengthened by these discussions, and his growing intimacy with Charles Mortimer, unfitted him to do justice to his former views, and the still remaining convictions of his better judgment. Their levity and profaneness in speaking of the scriptures, their authors, and their contents, at first shocked his piety,

and excited his disgust. But this impression gradually diminished, and by its frequency became less repulsive, till at length he could join in the broad laugh of scorn, or imperceptibly adopt the same language. A feeling of uncertainty and suspicion now arose in his anxious mind, with respect to the whole system of morals and theology. Many parts of scripture which he used to read with delight, and many doctrines which formerly appeared sublime and cheering, now seemed unimportant, or excited only a vague sentiment of indifference and dislike. The moment he perceived their beauty or felt their force, a host of doubts and objections started up in his disordered imagination, and scattered all the fine feelings and sacred thoughts, in which he once felt the sweetest pleasure. Indeed, he was no longer an impartial inquirer after truth. The balance of judgment, instead of being held with a steady hand, or moved only by the force of evidence, was often turned by the magic wand of secret prejudice. To remove his doubts in regard to the christian doctrine, he demanded stronger proof than human testimony can give, or sober reason require. But the slightest difficulties, the most futile objections, or the wildest conjectures, were deemed sufficient to

justify suspicion or awaken doubts. There is, indeed, a credulity in scepticism, no less than in faith; in consequence of which, the weakest and most despicable sophistry, is sometimes deemed conclusive, in refuting a doctrine that we dislike, or defending a theory we have determined to maintain.

For some time, Glenville continued to observe the forms of religion, to which he had been accustomed. But the interest and delight he had formerly felt in the solemnities of the sabbath, gradually gave place to other feelings more allied to scepticism and disgust. He particularly felt a growing indisposition to prayer. And if something like devotion was occasionally excited in his retired moments, he began to question its efficacy, and the propriety of its indulgence; as though the presence and agency of the Divine Spirit were the less real, or the less important, because the modes of his operation are invisible and unknown.

The longer he pursued his speculations, the more uncertain every thing appeared. Even those moral principles which are founded on the nature of things, the immutable basis of right and wrong, now seemed to be absolutely factitious, depending only on the slippery ground of civil law and rela-

tive expediency. The first principles of natural theology likewise, the doctrine of divine providence, human accountableness, and the immortality of the soul, at length appeared encompassed with difficulties no less formidable than those which surround the scriptures. Even the non-existence of the Deity seemed possible; so that atheism, with its delirious train, for a few days at least, invaded the dark regions of his disordered fancy. Having lost his confidence in the word of God, the only solid resting place for the hope of man, he perceived the weakness and insecurity of every hypothesis and every train of reasoning on which he attempted to repose. A total derangement and disruption of all his accustomed modes of thinking took place, and his mind was now bewildered in the confusion, mistiness, and interminable labyrinths of doubt. What is scepticism, indeed, but a fever of the mind, a moral delirium, in which the greatest indications of strength are symptoms of a deep and dangerous debility? In a mind afflicted with this malady, the greatest extremes meet, and the boldest efforts of thought are blended with its feeblest, most fantastic, and idiot-like conceptions.

Here, however, the subject of this memoir saw

the folly of atheism, and shrunk into himself, abashed and confounded at the impious temerity of his own thoughts. He perceived the wide and interminable gulf on which he had launched ; and looked around him eagerly, but in vain, for a safe landing from its troubled elements, or a firm anchorage amidst the tumult of its waves. He remembered that it was the *fool* who said in his heart, There is no God ; and the conviction which flashed upon his conscience was humbling and salutary.

CHAP. VI.

IN the meantime, the sceptical opinions Glenville had occasionally dropped in writing to his father and other correspondents in the neighbourhood, had awakened in their bosoms much solicitude and alarm. Mr. and Mrs. Glenville well knew that the openness of his disposition, however amiable in itself, was particularly susceptible of new impressions, and exposed him to versatility and doubt on theological subjects. They were afraid his orthodoxy had been shaken by plausible objections, and the fascinating appearance of some modern theory. They expected to hear, therefore, that he was fast verging towards heretical opinions, on certain points of considerable importance long controverted in the christian world.

But when they read the letter which contained an explicit avowal of his doubts respect-

ing christianity itself, in reply to Mr. Glenville's inquiries on the subject occasioned by former letters, their surprise and astonishment equalled their distress. They had never questioned the divine authority of the gospel themselves, and thought it could never appear questionable to any well-disposed mind early acquainted with its principles. They believed that its noted revilers in modern times, had for the most part also abandoned the common principles of morality, and diffused around them the pestilence of impiety and vice. Their piety and virtue, as well as their parental affection, were therefore severely wounded by their son's avowed scepticism, and the pernicious consequences likely to ensue. For a moment, it seemed to be a greater calamity, more distressing to their feelings, than the intelligence of his death. Their peace of mind yielded to the most painful anxiety, and the visions of delight which had rendered the future so cheering, were now overspread with impending evil. Fear, ever prone to aggravate misfortune, kept alive the dismal suspicion, that, "having made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," he would likewise sacrifice moral goodness at the shrine of pleasure, and by the depravity of his conduct, imbitter, if not

shorten, their future years. They were, therefore, anxious for his return home as speedily as possible, hoping the arguments of reason and friendship might obviate his doubts, and restore him to christian confidence. And in the mean time, Mr. Glenville endeavoured to arrest his aberrations from the truth, and lead him to a more correct way of thinking, by a full communication of his sentiments in the following letters.

Mr. Glenville's first Letter.

My dear Howard.

I will not attempt to describe the fears awakened in our minds by the ambiguity of your late correspondence, and by the spirit of levity and jesting in which you allude to certain important topics. But the disclosures contained in your last letter, have more than realized our worst fears, and excited feelings of the most painful nature, which I am unable to express.

You know, my dear Howard, the high importance, we have always attached to christianity ourselves, as a revelation of the divine will, confirmed by sufficient evidence, the only foundation of hope, and the only safe guide to virtue and

happiness. You remember the attention we have uniformly paid to its public and social duties, and the peace and order preserved in our family intercourse, by adhering as far as possible to the holy scriptures. And you cannot forget our concern, and especially the tender solicitude and unwearied exertions of your beloved mother, to instil into your mind the first principles of divine truth, and to prepare you by the best means in our power for a life of piety and goodness. You know, likewise, that our exertions, by the divine blessing, were not ineffectual; while your filial affection, early piety, and good conduct in general, gratified our wishes, and cheered our hopes of your future respectability and public usefulness.

Conceive, then, what must be our feelings, when all these prospects are suddenly beclouded; when the first fruits of early education are prematurely withered; when the structure of faith and piety, reared with so much tenderness in childhood, is at once overturned, and all the security and happiness connected with it destroyed! I shall not attempt to distress my own feelings or yours, by giving to this event all the dark colouring my fears would dictate, but shall leave it to your own reflections, which, I presume, are already not of the most

pleasing nature. I have been so long accustomed to address you in terms of complacency, if not of commendation, that I find it by no means an easy task to make use of a different strain. But affection, as well as duty, constrains me to do so.

Sometimes, my dear Howard, we flatter ourselves that your natural ingenuousness has somewhat misled you; and that, in your eagerness to disguise nothing, your expressions imply more than you intend. We fancy and hope you have not stated your views with sufficient clearness and caution, and that some things are to be considered rather as doubts and conjectures, than your real and fixed sentiments. Indeed, when I compare the short time you have had for these speculations, with the importance of the subject, I cannot suppose that you consider yourself a confirmed deist, or a decided disbeliever in the christian revelation. I shall, therefore, take it for granted, that you are still an inquirer, open to conviction, and ready to weigh any considerations we may urge in favour of the truth.

If my ability to write on the subject were equal to my regard for your happiness, I would examine every difficulty, to which you allude, and leave your scepticism without a refuge. But I must

confine my attention to a few cautions, against the fallacy and danger of infidel opinions, which I entreat you by every tie of parental affection and filial gratitude, most solemnly to consider.

I entreat you, my dear Howard, to pause awhile and ponder well the course you are taking, and the trackless waste of thought, the gloomy wilderness of doubt, in which it must soon terminate. Take heed, lest the openness of mind, which seems so honourable, and so necessary to an inquirer after truth, should in fact mislead your judgment, and make you the victim of instability and deceit. Patience and firmness, remember, are no less essential to impartiality and a sound judgment, than a willingness to be convinced of our errors, and a candid attention to the views and arguments of an opponent. If some miss the truth through the obstinacy of prejudice, others are cheated of it through pliability and haste. The best of causes may be caricatured and despised; and the worst may be rendered feasible by the ingenuity and eloquence of an advocate. If you are to doubt and deny christianity on the ground of plausible objections, you may for the same reason doubt and deny every thing. If you are to think well of deism, because it may be dressed off in a persuasive

form, you may for the same reason think well of every thing. So that every possible combination of thought, from the purest truth to the grossest absurdity, may at the same time be both believed and disbelieved, honoured and despised, by the same individual.

Before you part with the faith which your forefathers held sacred, let me intreat you, Howard, carefully to consider what is offered you in exchange. No man, in the right use of his senses, will destroy his own dwelling, and deprive himself and family of its safe shelter, till he has taken care to provide another equal to it, or at least sufficient for his purpose. It would, therefore, appear uncandid for me to suppose, that you and your colleagues could agree to undermine the gospel, and dispossess yourselves of its brightest hopes, without at least presuming that the system you have chosen will answer the same end as well. But in what does that system consist? what are its essential principles? and on what evidence or authority do they rest? If you answer, The religion of nature, and the dictates of right reason; it will still remain equally dubious, what constitutes the one, or by what standard you will try the other. In the writings of modern deists, you will

in vain look for any thing like a consistent scheme of theology, designed as a substitute for the christian doctrine. Nor have many of them evinced any concern to provide such a scheme, with a view to answer the same moral purposes as the gospel. Lord Herbert of Cherbury, if I mistake not, the most respectable deistical writer of the seventeenth century, made an attempt to form deism into a system ; of which, the existence of one supreme God, the duty of men to worship him, the importance of piety and virtue, the forgiveness of sins upon repentance, and the certainty of rewards and punishments in a future state, were asserted and maintained as the five principal and essential articles. But succeeding writers of the same school, instead of uniformly supporting these first principles, as the plain dictates of right reason, have for the most part spoken of them in a loose and ambiguous manner, so as to leave scarcely any points of agreement, or any set of doctrines, however few, which might be offered to the world as the approved and undoubted faith of modern deists.

The reflections so flippantly cast upon christian sects, on account of their speculative differences, might, therefore, with equal and even greater pro-

priety be retorted upon their adversaries. However christians differ on minor points, or in their mode of explaining great ones, the points of agreement common to all are numerous and important. All of them, with very few exceptions, hold the essential facts and doctrines of christianity on the same ground, and would give to an inquirer the same general views of its design, its authority, and its influence. But the advocates of deism are agreed in nothing except in their attack on the credibility of the gospel; and would leave in the minds of their disciples no common sentiment or persuasion, except an impression of the uncertainty which attends all moral and religious truth. It is, indeed, much easier, as well as more agreeable to the spirit of modern scepticism, to undermine your confidence in the christian doctrine and the importance of religion in general, than to confirm your belief in the first principles of natural religion and the immutable obligations of morality.

If you agree to disown and ridicule the gospel, it is to most of them a matter of perfect indifference what else you believe, or whether you believe just nothing at all. I would therefore caution you, Howard, against so hazardous an experiment, lest you be misled by the plausibilities of a system so vague, so indefinite, and untenable.

A tumultuous rabble, in a season of public irritation, may soon demolish the noblest edifice. But a long course of labour, under the direction of a skilful architect, will be required to rebuild it with the same order and magnificence. The fall, in such cases, indeed, is not irreparable. But if the temple of christian truth be overturned by the violence of sceptics, no temple can be reared out of its ruins, or otherwise provided, in which you can find the same security and repose.

There are some other points on which I am anxious to suggest a few timely cautions. You may, therefore, expect to hear from me again very speedily; and in the mean time, with earnest prayer that the Spirit of truth may direct your inquiries,

I am, my dear Howard,

Your affectionate father,

April 27th.

C. Glenville.

Mr. Glenville's second Letter.

My dear Howard,

In my last I wished you to consider the uncertainty of all deistical speculations. I would also, in the present state of your inquiries, warn you with equal earnestness, against the vain assumptions on which infidelity is founded.

It is assumed by the sceptic, from the beginning to the close of his career, that the whole christian world has been grossly imposed upon for eighteen centuries by a cunningly devised fable: that the books of the new testament are mere fictions written by the apostles, or absolute forgeries published in their name at a later period: that our Lord and his apostles, if they ever existed, were enthusiasts, or impostors, or both: and that all the miracles and prophecies recorded in the old testament, if not its common histories, are wholly fictitious and incredible.

But these assumptions appear to me so arrogant and improbable, not to say, shocking and impious, that no modest man, in the sober exercise of his reason, could allow himself to make them, without the clearest and most urgent necessity. You know, Howard, I am not one of those who estimate a system by the number of its adherents, or suppose a doubtful question can be decided by a majority of votes. But I cannot help thinking that a system of doctrine, maintained through a series of ages, by many hundred millions of people in the most enlightened quarter of the globe, is at least entitled to the most respectful consideration, and cannot be ridiculed and disowned by any

rational and sober mind, without the calmest inquiry and the weightiest reasons. It is true, we reject the faith of Mahomedans and the superstition of Hindoos, notwithstanding their antiquity, and the number of their advocates ; which may be supposed to invalidate this argument. But are those systems professedly founded on evidence? Are their claims freely canvassed by their votaries? And are those who disbelieve, at liberty to publish their reasons for disbelieving them? If you can answer these questions in the affirmative, I will drop this argument in favour of christianity. But since you must answer negatively, there is obviously no parallel in the case.

The christian doctrine is avowedly founded on facts and evidences, open to every one's inspection. Its claims have been freely discussed in all ages, and brought to the severest scrutiny. Its enemies have been at liberty to avow the grounds of their opposition, and in many ages have used the most subtle and the most violent means for its destruction. And yet it still continues to be as firmly believed, and as strenuously maintained, by the whole body of christians. And though they may differ among themselves in the interpretation of its doctrines, they are all of one mind as to its divine

origin and authority. The evidence in its favour must, therefore, be very strong, to produce a belief so spontaneous and so immovable. It is true, the ignorant are incompetent judges, and the clergy are interested in supporting its credibility; and you may, therefore, suppose little deference is due to their opinion. But what will you say to the main body of christian churches, composing the middle and better informed classes of society; who possess a due portion of common sense, and who could have no motive to profess and liberally support the gospel, unless they believed it to be divine; and whose belief, in a great many cases, must be the result of a calm and dispassionate investigation of its proofs, notwithstanding many temptations to neglect or disown them? If these people have the same means of judging for themselves as you have, and the same motives to make use of that judgment, how can you, and some few individuals of the same way of thinking, so rashly suppose them to be the victims of a gross and palpable delusion? The case is doubtless possible; but, on the ground of common sense, there is every probability against it. And nothing can justify so arrogant an assumption, which treats so large a body of enlightened men with contempt, but an acuteness

of some fabulist skilled in mythology and hieroglyphics, his notion was too repugnant to common sense, and too subversive of all historic testimony, to merit the least notice, or to deceive the feeblest mind. So that the most determined sceptic, if he retains any principle in common with other men, must admit that the whole scheme of christianity, and the books usually appealed to as the record of its principles, must be traced up to the evangelists and apostles, as their acknowledged and unquestionable authors.

But if christianity, as contained in the new testament, was in fact published by the apostles, it must either be a true system delivered by divine authority, or a cunningly devised fable formed by a set of the most crafty impostors. In my opinion, Howard, the facts and circumstances are of such a nature, that, if they had no existence in truth, the apostles could not be deceived themselves, or led by the force of imagination to believe and propagate them for realities. No person surely can read the new testament, and yet think our Lord and his apostles were enthusiasts and fanatics who merely fancied themselves inspired. They neither did nor said any thing that can justify this suspicion; but almost every fact and every saying proves that they

were calm and deliberate, acting in a rational and sober manner.

Will you then suppose, Howard, that they were deliberate impostors? But this seems to me, almost, if not absolutely, impossible. For if good men, they could not have agreed to deceive the world; and if bad men, they would never have invented a system like this, so repugnant to depraved passions and secular interests. But their station, their slender advantages, their number their co-operation, their sacrifices, their strenuous perseverance, and their signal success in the face of martyrdom, render the idea of a collusion absolutely incredible. Only one out of the number proved to be a traitor, and his treachery, instead of discovering the fraud, which it most likely would, if there had been any, only served to ratify the doctrine. It cannot be supposed, without manifest absurdity, that God would work a miracle, or permit a miracle to be wrought, in support of an imposture. If, therefore, the miracles wrought by the apostles were real, you must acknowledge, Howard, that they were not impostors, but the inspired messengers of God. And yet, do they not constantly appeal to those miracles, as well-known and indisputable facts, which none of their

of scripture, or the testimony of its authors. All the arguments against the gospel I have yet met with, are either certain philosophical difficulties, drawn from the the theory or prejudice of the objector, which itself needs to be examined; or various circumstantial objections arising from particular narrations and inferior parts of the system, which leave its main facts unimpaired. Indeed, the very same mode of arguing might be employed to disprove the Newtonian system of astronomy, or to undermine the credibility of the most useful and best authenticated history yet delivered to the world. Unless you have, therefore, discovered some new and surprising reasons for disbelieving the christian cause, I must warn you against erecting the structure of your faith on so feeble and sandy a foundation.

It was my intention, Howard, to add a few thoughts with respect to the consequences and tendency of deism; but the length of this letter obliges me to defer them till another opportunity. In the mean time, let me entreat you patiently to consider what I have written, while you may rest assured that I remain,

Yours most affectionately,

May 1st.

C. Glenville.

Mr. Glenville's third Letter.

My dear Howard,

The assumptions of infidelity, against which my last letter was designed to caution you, likewise involve certain consequences which I also wish you to consider. If christianity were a false religion, it would follow that the best book in the world was written by the worst impostors on purpose to deceive; and that a system which produces the greatest moral good, and has always proved a blessing to its consistent votaries, is nothing better than an impious fraud, which every honest mind should reject with abhorrence.

You must confess that the bible throughout contains the sublimest views of the divine character and government, and enforces the purest principles of morality by motives drawn from the authority of God. You must also admit, that when persons really believe the gospel, and conform to it as the rule of life, it elevates their mental and moral powers, makes them better members of society, and inclines them to cultivate sentiments of habitual piety and virtue.

No doubt, many who call themselves christians

are addicted to every vice which can degrade the individual, or injure the community. But it cannot be pretended that their religion makes them bad men, or that any of their vices are committed under the sanction of scripture. Men may become depraved in defiance of christianity; even while they profess to believe and venerate its doctrines. But in proportion as those doctrines do, in fact, influence their heart and conduct, the effect is salutary and noble, cheering to themselves, and beneficial to society. And yet the system which produces so much good is assumed to be an impious fraud, which every honest mind must detest. If, however, you believe a supposition so preposterous, which has no parallel in the history of the world, I must pity your credulity, and deplore the weakness and aberrations of your intellect.

If, moreover, the claims of christianity to a divine origin be untrue, it follows that God has given to man no revelation of himself, and no means of knowing his character, his government, or his laws: We have then no knowledge of the true God, except what our feeble reason, by long and dubious study, may decipher in the works of nature; which, in the most favoured individual, can never rise to any thing like certainty, or

produce any considerable effect. We know not how God is to be worshipped, what kind of worship is most acceptable to him, or whether he will regard our worship at all; but are left to the terrors of superstition on the one hand, or to the vacuity of atheism on the other. Though conscious of guilt, and alive to fear, we know not on what condition God will grant forgiveness, or whether he will shew mercy in the remission of sins at all. We may conjecture and hope, but we can have no assurance. The same train of reasoning which destroys the credibility of the gospel, must, in fact, if followed to its legitimate consequences, equally destroy the plainest principles of natural religion, and lead us by a quick descent, to the idiot-like repose of atheism; or the restless anxiety of perpetual and universal doubt. Without revelation, there is no rule of life but human opinion, in which no confidence can be placed: no standard of right and wrong, but the usages of society, and the speculations of philosophers, which are always changing: no ground of moral responsibility, and the obligations of virtue and religion, except the dubious suggestions of natural conscience, which are easily set aside: and no evidence of rewards and punishments in a state of being after death,

except the hopes and fears of mankind themselves, which are scorned by the sceptic, as the relics of superstition. Setting aside revelation, the world becomes a mystery, which no one can explain: a mass of confusion, out of which no voice can educe order: a state of darkness, in which the eye of reason can discover nothing harmonious or distinct. But I shrink from the consequences of this gloomy hypothesis! If you, my dear Howard, are prepared to pursue your way through a pathless desert, where the sun of righteousness never shines, I deplore your temerity and infatuation. But if you deprecate the consequence, avoid the delusion which leads to it.

Nor must I omit to caution you against the moral tendency of scepticism, and the pernicious effect of infidelity on the life and character of its votaries. It is not easy to analyze the moral effect of a man's creed, or to shew in every case the connexion between principle and practice. But the constitution and known experience of mankind shew, that the disposition and conduct must, in general, take their complexion from the ideas and principles most frequently thought of and approved. Some, indeed, are better, and others worse, than their avowed principles fully exemplified, would

make them. We must not appeal to character, therefore, as the sure criterion of a man's creed. But the general tendencies of scepticism and unbelief are sufficiently distinct and palpable, not to be mistaken by the most common observer.

One of its first and most necessary effects is, the gradual decline and final extinction of a devotional spirit. It is certainly possible that the knowledge of God, as displayed only in creation and providence, may awaken in the philosophic breast some sentiments of holy gratitude and praise. But the mode of thinking which leads a man to reject the gospel, is, in my view at least, decidedly unfavourable to such sentiments. And I have no conception that a single unbeliever could be found, who habitually cherishes these devout feelings as the result of his own principles, or deems them essential to the character of a good man. The case is certainly possible: but I shall greatly wonder to find it true. And I fear your own experience will prove, that the more sceptical you become in reference to the gospel, the less disposition you feel for prayer. Indeed, I strongly suspect that a devotional feeling is well-nigh extinguished already!

Scepticism; likewise, generates a proud and

supercilious disposition. How frequently does the infidel look down upon the religious and more estimable part of mankind, with feelings of pity and contempt, filled with self-applause, and exalted on the pedestal of his own fancied superiority? It is amusing to see the lofty airs he assumes, and the tone of confidence with which he asserts his own opinions, and condemns others. Were you to judge of the whole fraternity by their language and manner, you would regard them as a superior race of mortals, endowed with more than human penetration, and appointed by general consent, to cleanse out the Augean stable of priestcraft, and rescue mankind from the delusion of ages. Doubtless, they are the men, and wisdom will die with them! though you and your colleagues, Howard, seem disposed to prevent or remedy so great a loss.

There is, likewise, a powerful tendency in scepticism to produce laxity, feebleness, and instability of moral principle; in consequence of which, habits of virtue are weakened, and the superior motives arising from a sense of rectitude and religion, give place to those of interest and expediency. I have also observed in persons of this stamp, zeal for liberty in opposing the commonly

received doctrine, mingled with bitterness and intolerance towards its supporters, impeaching their integrity, and scorning their talents: a furious outcry against christian bigotry and violence, ill-concealing the existence of a spirit, which would soon extinguish true liberty, and compel the world to worship the idol which infidelity might set up. Sceptics, moreover, notwithstanding their loud pretensions to philanthropy, often evince the greatest indifference to the moral condition of mankind. Even when alive to feelings of humanity, in cases of personal distress, they will oppose and vilify the noblest efforts of christian benevolence, and rather leave barbarians and idolaters in the lowest state of intellectual debasement, than have them civilized and enlightened by the gospel. It would be difficult for you to mention a single writer on the side of deism, who was a consistent friend of liberty, and a practical philanthropist. They are the first to revile, and the last to encourage, the melioration of degenerate tribes, when morality and religion are deemed essential to their improvement. And observation compels me to believe, that no rational attempt to improve the moral state of mankind has ever been, or ever will be, made under the mere influence of

deistical opinions. Persons of this class may be benevolent, and may take an active part in schemes of public utility, in which virtue and piety have some share; but it is not deism which prompts them to it, as its legitimate and spontaneous effect.

What, indeed, have we to expect, when confirmed infidels feel the greatest indifference, as well as the greatest uncertainty, respecting the momentous doctrine of a future state? Finding in their own system no evidence in favour of immortality, on which any great dependence can be placed, they at length cease to concern themselves about it. A point so uncertain, they conclude, can be of no great practical importance: and if they should live again after death, a kind Deity will of course make such excellent and spotless characters as happy as they can wish to be. It would, therefore, be in vain to pursue the inquiry, or to impose any restraint upon themselves in the present life, with a view of preparing for the future.

From such sentiments, Howard, were they generally prevalent, what could we expect, but the greatest moral delinquency? The bonds of society, unless secured by the civil power, would suffer a total disruption; and the whole constitution of

life would be disorganized and destroyed. A deluge of vice would overspread the world, sweeping away our chief interests and most valuable endearments. Society would soon become a corrupt mass of moral putridity, feeding upon itself, and hastening its own extinction. The vital and vitalizing principle of divine truth, which now neutralizes moral evil, and often brings forth life from the dead, would then cease to operate; and the natural tendency of sin would find no remedy and no restraint, but in the destruction of its own materials.

Far be it from me, Howard, to say or insinuate that all these consequences may be seen in every deist, or that all sceptics are bad men. On the contrary, I have known some who sustained a most amiable character, and wanted nothing but *the truth*, to make them exemplary christians. And so long as they breathe the atmosphere of christian society, surrounded by men of integrity and wisdom, whose lives do honour to their profession, this will frequently be the case. The natural effect of scepticism will be controlled by the relics of early education, and the influence of their connexions, imperceptibly operating on the mind. But if the incentives to moral goodness

resulting from the gospel, were removed ; and if a whole nation of sceptics were allowed to develop the tendency of unbelief, I have no doubt it would soon prove itself to be " a monster, vast, horrible, mis-shapen, deprived of light, and fatal to humanity ! "

But I must hasten to close this letter, which far exceeds my intended limits. My regard for your happiness, of which, Howard, you can have no doubt ; and my desire to shew you the true character of scepticism, in contrast with religion, have led me to express my opinions, at greater length than I designed. You will, perhaps, think some of my expressions severe and uncandid, though I fear your own experience will repel the charge, and justify their severity. Happy shall I be to find that you are still open to conviction, and ready to receive with meekness and sincerity the advice and arguments of your christian friends. Your return to the Lodge, which we are anxiously looking for, may then, in some happy measure, obviate your doubts, diminish our fears respecting you, and restore that serenity of mind which has been suspended.

Your beloved mother, my dear Howard, would also have written to you, had she been able

sufficiently to calm the anxiety and distress which still agitate her feelings. But she has read these letters, and wishes me to assure you of her entire agreement with the sentiments contained in them, as though expressed in her own language. I therefore again entreat you calmly to consider with the feelings of a child, what I have written to you with the feelings of a parent; and with earnest prayer for your true happiness, in which your fond mother most fervently unites,

I remain, dear Howard,

Your affectionate father,

May 7th.

C. Glenville.

CHAP. VII.

No sooner had Mr. and Mrs. Glenville received the intelligence of their son's defection from the truth, than they sent for their esteemed friend, Mr. Ward, and informed him of the circumstance. They had long reposed great confidence in his judgment, and in former troubles had experienced many proofs of his readiness, as a christian friend and pastor, to give them all the advice and sympathy in his power. They knew his high regard for Howard, and the concern he had always shewn, and would still shew, for his welfare. Mr. Glenville expressed his intention to write to him immediately, as contained in the preceding chapter, and begged his friend's co-operation for the same purpose; not doubting but his superior knowledge of theology, and the respect Howard had for his judgment, would render any thing he might think proper to write on the subject, highly acceptable

and useful to him, in his present unsettled state of mind.

Mr. Ward was deeply affected at the circumstance, and could scarcely credit the letter in which Howard had avowed his sentiments. He endeavoured, however, to allay the distress felt by Mr. and Mrs. Glenville, and suggested some considerations drawn from the character of Howard, and from the letter itself, which might calm their agitation, and raise their hopes of his restoration to the truth. He assured them how ready and anxious he was to do all in his power either by writing or conversation, to remove the doubts of his young friend, and to rescue his faith and piety from impending ruin. He therefore left them in some degree soothed by this assurance, and soon after wrote the following letters.

Mr. Ward's first Letter.

My dear Howard,

It is with feelings of no common anxiety, that I sit down to write to you on this occasion. Our correspondence has always been of so pleasing a nature, that I know not how to write under the influence of an event which has excited the deepest regret. But my

concern for your happiness constrains me, without delay, to communicate a few remarks on a subject of the highest importance, which, I trust, you will candidly and seriously consider.

You will not be surprised to learn that your esteemed relatives have acquainted me with your last letter, and wished me to answer its contents. Though unable to conceal my own surprise and sorrow, I was the more anxious to sooth their distress, and to suggest the most favourable view of your expressions, and of the unhappy state of mind into which you have fallen. And I fondly hope your next letter will tend to assuage their fears, and to heal the wound, deep and severe as it is, which their peace of mind and parental affection are now suffering.

Having no doubts myself respecting the divine origin of the gospel, and thinking highly of your good sense and piety, I scarcely deemed it necessary, my dear friend, before you left home, to caution you against the sophistries of unbelievers. But I am now ready to blame myself on this point, and fear the means used for your christian instruction were insufficient to prepare you for the dangers of a bold and speculative age. But, I trust, you will take a calm and solemn review of the

process and evidences of the christian revelation, as maintained by the ablest writers, before you resign your faith, and hope, and happiness, to the delusive and fatal influence of unbelief.

In adverting to the claims of christianity, it is needless for me to remind you, my dear sir, that I do not mean any of those peculiar modifications of it which prevail in christian churches, but the entire system itself as contained in the new testament. If you receive the scriptures as the word of God, and with an humble dependence on divine teaching, endeavour rightly to understand and observe them; the modes of faith and forms of worship which occasion diversity of sentiment, will, for the most part, be found comparatively of little consequence. The doctrine to be believed is most clearly expressed by St. Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purified our

sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." The claims of this doctrine, are likewise expressed with equal perspicuity and force in the following chapter: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard; lest at any time we should let them slip. For, if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

Let me, then, entreat you, my beloved friend, to consider the desirableness and necessity of such a revelation, both to make known the true God, and to restore mankind to virtue and happiness. Let me entreat you, also, calmly to consider the evidences which prove the credibility of the christian faith, as transmitted to us in the holy scriptures. And, if the inquiry be properly pur-

sued, I trust you will soon come to a satisfactory conclusion.

If you wished to obtain the knowledge of some distinguished personage, so as to form a true estimate of his character, there are, obviously, but two ways of obtaining it; namely, by his general conduct and works, or by a voluntary and specific declaration of his own views. If the person were removed from your immediate observation, the ideas formed of his character, merely from what you have seen and heard of his conduct, would be very partial, and liable to mistakes. But, when a person communicates to the world a true portrait of his own character, describing the habitual state of his feelings; the knowledge we desire may be easily acquired, faithfully preserved, and universally disseminated.

To a certain extent, therefore, "the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead, may be clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things which are made." But, as the divine nature and mode of operation infinitely transcend the narrow comprehension of finite thought, the ideas we can form of the Deity, by his works alone, must be very limited and obscure. But, from the revelation of

bility of a miracle, because nothing like it takes place in the common course of nature, would be egregious folly; since its occurrence, however wonderful, if frequent and regular, would cease to be miraculous, and could no longer be appealed to as a special proof of the divine interposition and authority. But miraculous as the nature and evidences of divine revelation may be to us, let me remind you, my esteemed friend, that its communication, "at sundry times and in divers manners," is not to be considered as a deviation from the first arrangements of divine providence, any more than the appearance of a comet in the heavens can be called a derangement of the solar system; but it was originally fixed with as much foresight and adaptation to moral purposes, as the laws of nature in the ordinary revolutions and events of the material world.

The chief inquiry, then, which demands our attention is, whether the scriptures of the old and new testament do, in fact, contain a revelation from the Spirit of God, designed for man's happiness, and should, therefore, be received by us with corresponding affection, as the ground of our hopes and fears, and the rule of our faith and conduct? The subject, my friend, is one of the greatest

possible interest. It has received the sanction of wise and good men in all ages. Nothing, indeed, can be more desirable in itself, or more conducive to the dignity and happiness of our nature, than correct views of truth, and a well-founded confidence. And if christianity be true, its claims are infinitely important, and its belief or rejection must involve the most serious and lasting consequences.

Let me, therefore, again urge you, my friend, to take a calm and deliberate view of the arguments, from which the truth and divine authority of the christian revelation are clearly inferred. The authenticity of its records, the credibility of its facts, the character of its agents, the harmony of its dispensations, the excellence of its principles, the grandeur of its discoveries, the sufficiency of its credentials, and the perpetuity of its influence, are subjects of inquiry which I entreat you more especially to consider. Each of these particulars, indeed, opens a wide and interesting field of inquiry, and deserves all the attention you can give. But the slightest view you can take of these facts, in the spirit of an humble and serious inquirer after truth; will convince you, if, indeed, you need such conviction, that our faith in the

prophetic, moral, and devotional, had not only been written, but published and received as genuine writings. They were soon after united with the pentateuch, and for a series of ages appealed to by all parties in the Jewish state, as books of the highest authority in subservience to the law. During our Lord's ministry, the old testament scriptures were not only owned by the Jews themselves, and publicly read in the synagogues, but were appealed to by our Saviour and his apostles, as the standard of divine truth. They had also been translated into the Greek and Syrian languages, and were generally known and acknowledged by the learned in all parts of the civilized world.

In reference to the new testament it is equally certain, that the profession of christianity has existed in the world for nearly eighteen centuries, during the whole of which, subsequent to the death of the apostles, the books in our possession have been quoted and appealed to by its different advocates, in disputing among themselves, or repelling the accusations of unbelievers. It is as unquestionable as a fact of this nature can be, that the people who first received the gospels and epistles from their several authors, felt a deep sense of

their importance as the compositions of inspired men, and employed the utmost care to have them handed down for the benefit of posterity unmutated and unimpaired. In multiplying copies of the old and new testament, every precaution appears to have been used, both by jews and christians, to prevent mistakes. And the divisions and controversies which have taken place in all periods of the christian church, are a sufficient proof that no material alterations or gross corruptions of the original could have been attempted, to serve the interests of a party, without being discovered and exposed. In short, my dear Howard, there are no books come down to us from ancient sages, whose genuineness and purity are better verified, or more indubitable, than the holy scriptures.

In reading a book professedly historical, our first inquiry is, whether or not the statements contained in it are true. If the events in question happened at a time or place in which we had no means of knowing them by personal acquaintance, it would be right to inquire, whether the character of the historian, the nature of the events themselves, the manner in which he states them, the sources from which he derived his knowledge, and

the testimony of other historians, sufficiently confirm the veracity of the facts related. If the writers of national history were to publish a number of fictions, falsehoods, or misrepresentations intermingled with the truth, many of their contemporaries would be induced to expose the deception, and consign their writings to contempt. In matters of great interest and universal concern, whether they be ancient or modern, near or remote, the truth or falsehood of a narrative is for the most part closely scrutinized and sufficiently confirmed.

If then, my dear friend, we examine the scriptures upon these principles, we shall find in the particular mention of times and places, persons and circumstances, and in the whole texture and style of writing, abundant proof that the sacred writers intended to record nothing but what they believed and knew to be the truth. It can scarcely be imagined that the five books of Moses, and other historical parts of the old testament, would have been received with universal confidence by the people of Israel, even when the events recorded must have been fresh in their memories, if the statements contained in them had been untrue. Some of the facts are indeed very extraordinary,

which may seem to justify suspicions. But the greatness of these events would have rendered the imposture more notorious, and enabled every man of common sense to detect the cheat. The miraculous events, moreover, are interwoven with the common history in a manner so intimate and inseparable, that if the latter be true, the former cannot be fallacious, but the whole must stand or fall on the same ground. But the writings of the prophets are founded on the facts affirmed in the historical books; and by a continual reference to past events and well known customs, prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, the credibility of the statements which those books contain.

If, moreover, we proceed to the new testament, we shall perceive in the narratives written by the four evangelists, every appearance of the most sacred regard for truth. The facts which they record respecting our Saviour's doctrine, miracles, death, and resurrection, are amply verified by the acts of the apostles and the epistolary writings. Had they been untrue or even doubtful, the opponents of the gospel wanted neither ability nor inclination to expose them to public scorn. But their veracity in the most essential particulars is corroborated by the acknowledgements of the

jewish sanhedrim, and by the testimony of Josephus, Porphyry, Celsus, Pliny, and a numerous host of writers, in the first three centuries, enemies as well as friends. In short, whether we appeal to the books themselves, or to the foreign and circumstantial evidences of their credibility, no solid reason can be adduced to impeach the truth of a single narrative, much less to invalidate the claims of the whole volume.

Although bad men are sometimes made the instruments of moral good, yet it seems reasonable to expect, that the character of persons raised up by divine providence for important purposes, should, in a great measure, correspond to the work assigned. If the prophets and apostles were indeed the messengers of God, inspired to communicate to the world a revelation of his purposes and commands, it is but just to anticipate, in the discharge of their commission, those evidences of faith and piety, wisdom and integrity, purity and benevolence, fortitude and perseverance, which would verify their pretensions, and furnish an example of the truth and excellence of their religion.

In the character of Moses and the jewish prophets, it must be confessed, we do not find an

entire exemption from moral defect; nor can absolute perfection be looked for in any man. But no person, I conceive, can take an impartial review of their whole conduct, and, at the same instant, consider the time and circumstances in which they performed their part, without admiring the simplicity and purity of their manners, their manifest superiority to a selfish and vain ambition, the elevated fervour of their devotions, and the manly firmness they displayed in the hour of difficulty, martyrdom, and death. Their characters, viewed in comparison with the greatest sages of antiquity, instead of sinking, will rise in our esteem. In a dark and benighted age, they appeared as stars of the first magnitude. And though persecuted, in many cases, by the people for whose benefit their instructions were delivered, they were men of God, whose names should be embalmed in our memories, and spoken of with gratitude as the excellent of the earth.

With respect to the apostles of Christ, the same things may be affirmed more forcibly, and with stronger evidence. Though they had neither learning, opulence, nor power, to promote their cause, they went forth in pursuance of their Lord's commission, as the avowed ministers of a new and

a divine religion, intending to overturn, by their instructions, those false and pernicious systems of superstition which had been established for ages, and were every where supported by the great. And yet they were neither madmen, impostors, nor fanatics; but they spoke the words of truth and soberness, commending the gospel to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and, at length, suffering martyrdom in attestation of the doctrine they delivered.

What then, my dear Howard, shall be said and thought of the character of Christ himself, in whom even his bitterest adversaries could find nothing to justify their malice, or to substantiate their charge? His unexampled excellences, as delineated by the four evangelists in their simple unstudied narratives, leave on the christian's mind a deep and indelible conviction that the authority he assumed was real, and the doctrines taught by him entitled to universal credence. That the author and finisher of our faith was a model of every virtue that can adorn humanity, or benefit the world, has been acknowledged, indeed, by many, who at the same time, denied the truth, or questioned the authority of his doctrine. But no person, possessing the wisdom and virtue of our Saviour, to

say nothing of his divine nature, could either be imposed upon himself, or attempt to impose on others, by assuming a commission for which he had no credentials, or in propagating, under divine sanction, a religion, which, at the same time, was untrue. The character of Christ and his apostles may, therefore, be deemed a decisive evidence, that the system recorded in the new testament, is indeed "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."

Allow me also, before I close this letter, to remind you, that the different parts of divine revelation, though given to the church at sundry times and in divers manners, instead of being opposed to each other, are perfectly consistent and harmonious. The patriarchal dispensation prepared the way for the divine legation of Moses, the lawgiver of Israel. The spirit and design of the mosaic institutions, were further developed and exemplified by the ministry and writings of the prophets till the close of the old testament. The divine authority of Moses and the prophets is acknowledged and maintained by the founders of the new testament; and the accomplishment of their predictions is referred to as one of the principal evidences of the christian faith. Though different persons were employed in different ages, as the inspired messen-

gers of God, there is nothing discordant or irreconcilable in their commission or doctrines. Some of their commands certainly were local, temporary, and prefigurative, and were in consequence abolished by the same authority, when the design of their institution had been answered. But whatever difference of a circumstantial nature may exist between them, their authority, their principles, and their designs, are the same. The different parts of the divine economy, including the patriarchal, the jewish, and the christian dispensations, must, therefore, be viewed as gradual disclosures of the same divine purpose, and modified applications of the same plan. Like the different wheels of the same machinery, they are mutually dependent, and intimately combined.

The new testament is, in fact, the perfection of the old ; and includes all the discoveries we are warranted to expect, till the consummation of all things. But if the one be true, the other, though less important, must be true likewise. The new confirms and elucidates the old, and is itself confirmed by the same circumstance. Hence there exists in the different books of scripture, though written by different persons at remote periods, a coincidence of design which has no analogy in the

whole range of uninspired composition. Could the same number of books, written by the best authors in this or any other nation, at periods equally distant from each other, be collected into one volume of the same bulk, it would, on the contrary, exhibit a strange mass of contradictory and irreconcilable ideas. What, then, could produce in the sacred volume this remarkable agreement, but the unity of truth, and the unerring dictates of the same divine and infallible instructor?

I should now proceed to the intrinsic excellences of the sacred volume, but, for the present, must leave these cursory hints to your candid and serious attention; while I again subscribe myself, dear sir,

Your affectionate friend,

Vicarage, May 10th.

W. A. Ward.

Mr. Ward's third Letter.

My dear Howard,

In my last letter I requested you to notice the unity of design so remarkable from the commencement to the close of the sacred volume. In the support of a bad cause, perhaps, one or two examples might be adduced of the remarkable consistency and steady co-operation of many individuals, through a series of ages,

like the company of the jesuits, or the supporters of the papal dignity. But the unanimity of the sacred writers has been produced and sustained by the purest principles, and in the furtherance of a cause which secures the present rights, and tends to the final happiness of mankind. Deceit and falsehood, error and absurdity, superstition and fanaticism, vice and impiety, selfishness and oppression, with all the bad passions and corrupt practices of a fallen world, instead of being sanctioned or allowed in the records of the gospel, are severely censured, and unequivocally forbidden. The doctrines which the sacred volume inculcates, respecting the nature and government of God, the state and destination of man, the means provided by divine wisdom for our redemption, and the person and offices of the Redeemer, all recommend themselves to our belief by their own reasonableness, or by the competent testimony of their divinely authorized teachers. The duties it enjoins in all the branches of piety and virtue, are in the highest degree proper and unexceptionable. Its ritual institutions are at once simple, and yet dignified; rational, and yet impressive; solemn in their nature, and salutary in their influence, Its motives, likewise, are elevated and powerful;

derived not from human authority, or the cold calculations of a narrow selfishness, but from the command of God, the native dignity and usefulness of doing right, mingled with the sanctions of a future judgment. In short, it condemns and opposes sin under every form, directs the mind to universal holiness, and, in language the most expressive, calls our attention to the highest attainment of moral excellence, as the true end and glory our being.

No collection of books, of the same number and magnitude, chosen from the philosophers of antiquity, could present to the world a system of principles, or a code of morals, at all commensurate, much less superior, to the sacred volume. In comparison with the descriptions given us in the prophetic writings of the divine attributes and authority, the most sublime paragraphs of heathen writers on the same subject are puerile and contemptible. And in contrast with the proverbs of Solomon, and the moral instructions of the new testament, the most approved maxims of ancient moralists, confess their inferiority and retire. And yet the writers of these books were untutored in the schools, and strangers to the beauty and effect of Grecian eloquence. Whence, then, my friend,

do you suppose, had these men this wisdom, and how did they compose their invaluable instructions? The only reply you can give must be, "That the prophecies and precepts of holy writ, came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

If God had spoken to the fathers by inspiration, merely to inculcate a pure system of morality, the object might have been deemed insufficient to require so extraordinary an interposition. The very idea of a divine revelation includes the discovery of some truths, which it would have been impossible to perceive by the light of nature, though perhaps, in making such discoveries, the promotion of moral purity would be a principal design. Now in the sacred volume it is uniformly asserted or assumed, that the human race have lost their innocence, and fallen into a state of moral ruin, from the fatal consequences of which their own wisdom and virtue are insufficient to deliver them. But, in connexion with these facts, which history and experience verify, it directs our faith to a GLORIOUS DELIVERER, in whom all the families of the earth may be blessed. To make known the designs of God respecting the redemption and final happiness of mankind, and to manifest the

divine person by whom that redemption should be accomplished, were the primary objects of divine revelation, through all its discoveries, from the first promise till the close of the apocalypse. After being intimated to the patriarchs, typified by the mosaic law, and predicted in glowing language by the prophets, its manifestation was at length completed and verified in the wonders of the new testament, when "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Here the discoveries of all the dispensations centre, like rays of light issuing from the same sun, and converging to one focus. To the Saviour, whom the apostles published, gave all the prophets witness, proving that "the testimony of Christ is the spirit of prophecy." His mediatorial work and supreme authority as the Son of God, being thus disclosed and ratified by his ascension into heaven, and by the mission of his apostles, the closing parts of revelation carry us forward, through the lapse of ages, to the last events and eternal consequences of his spiritual reign. It not only foretels the ultimate triumphs of the cross, and the universality of the Lord's kingdom, but announces also the certainty of his second advent, as the judge of all, and the final retributions he will administer to an

assembled world. The parts of this scheme already accomplished, justify and require our belief in the final consummation of the whole; while the grandeur of its discoveries constrains us to regard them as matters of pure revelation, which no human imagination could conceive, bearing upon their aspect the image and superscription of God.

What, then, will you say, my friend, if I mention still further in favour of the gospel, the suitability and sufficiency of its credentials, and the perpetuity and extent of its saving influence? If it be a right maxim that every kind of truth should be verified by evidences suitable to its own nature, a divine revelation ought, doubtless, to be confirmed by supernatural proof. No person professing to be an inspired prophet, or an angel from heaven, would be entitled to the faith and obedience of mankind, unless he produced credentials to prove his mission, the reality and truth of which might be ascertained by a sober and upright inquirer. Now, in unison with this principle, we are assured by the sacred writers, that Moses and the prophets, under the old testament, and our Lord and his apostles under the new, ratified their divine mission and authority by a series of miracles which no persons could perform, unless God were with

them. To those who were eye-witnesses of these miracles, who accompanied Moses in the wilderness, or saw the works and heard the sayings of our Lord, what evidence could be more unquestionable or convincing? It is in itself a species of evidence suited to the nature of the case, and like the truth it proposes to ratify, is addressed to all men with the same propriety and force, and may be equally understood and ascertained by the prince and the peasant, the philosopher and the clown. If, indeed, the miracles wrought by the founders of our religion had been few in number, and those few performed in secret, and concealed in mystery, the possibility of a collusion might have weakened this effect, and justified the refusal of entire confidence. But their number and magnitude, the publicity of their performance, and all the circumstances connected with them, must have rendered their reality incapable of suspicion; while the transfiguration of our Saviour, his resurrection from the dead, and visible ascension into heaven, with the train of consequences resulting from it, must have raised the evidence of his divine mission to a high degree of sensible demonstration, as well as moral certainty.

With respect to ourselves, who live in an age so

remote, the conclusions arising from these miraculous interpositions must, of course, be less decisive. But, if the books in which these miracles are recorded be true, and if the facts themselves are thereby sufficiently confirmed, no lapse of time, or distance of situation, can invalidate their authority; but the evidence they afford in attestation of the christian faith, is equally conclusive and irresistible. If, however, the written testimony be less convincing than the testimony of our senses, the deficiency thence arising is abundantly supplied by the accomplishment of prophecy, which may be deemed a standing miracle, whose evidence becomes more luminous and indubitable, as time and events verify the anticipations of the prophetic vision. To this may be added, as a confirmation of our faith in modern times, the amazing success of the apostles' ministry, and the moral change produced in the heathen world, merely by the preaching of a few unlettered men, in defiance of the most powerful prejudices and passions, customs and interests, fortified by a combined and implacable opposition. The perpetuity of its influence also, through a series of ages, notwithstanding the assaults of its adversaries and the corruptions of its friends, is a fact which nothing can account for

but the force of truth, and the admission of its intrinsic worth and immutable authority, as a divine system. Many, indeed, have been its moral triumphs, and the trophies of its saving power, in all ages, and in every district of the christian world. By a spiritual efficacy, which no other system can boast, it has delivered, and is still delivering, multitudes from the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, translating them out of darkness into marvellous light, and fitting them by its holy influence for the sacred enjoyments of eternity. It may, therefore, be as truly affirmed of persons in the present day, as our Lord said of the pharisees. If they believe not Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

If, then, all these evidences concur to ratify the christian doctrine, the inspiration and divine authority of the sacred volume, as the unerring standard of divine truth, arises from it as a natural and necessary conclusion. Every consideration which rendered a divine revelation desirable or expedient, constrains us to believe that, instead of ceasing with the removal of its messengers, or of being left to the doubtful and corrupt medium of

tradition, its discoveries and institutions would be preserved entire, and the knowledge of them transmitted to the world by a written testimony. This testimony preserves the truth in its native purity, amidst all the revolutions of society, and the fluctuations of human belief; and is likewise equally accessible to men in all ages and in every clime, when they inquire after truth, and are willing to benefit by its instructions. By ourselves these holy records have been received under every advantage; while considerations of the utmost importance require us personally to examine and practically to observe them. Happy are they who, like Timothy, from their childhood have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ. "For all scripture divinely inspired, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

And this hope I have hitherto felt, and shall still retain, in reference to a friend, for whose best interests, present and eternal, my most fervent prayers shall ascend to the divine throne. Yes, my dear Howard, I still feel a cheering persuasion that you will, in due time, surmount

the difficulties which sophistry has raised before you, and that you will come forth from the trial with your faith strengthened, your piety renewed, and your talents fitted for superior usefulness. If you pursue these inquiries in a right spirit, divine light will disperse the darkness in which the truth seems to be involved. Doubts and difficulties will become less formidable as you approach them; and you will at length reach those delightful regions of faith, hope, and charity, where the Sun of Righteousness, in his meridian lustre, irradiates the soul.

My long intimacy with your esteemed parents, the regard I feel for yourself, and the respect you have always shown me, forbid any apology for these lengthened epistles, which I have no doubt you will read and consider with due seriousness and candour. I need not say how happy I shall be to hear from you at any time, and to solve, as far as lies in my power, any doubts and perplexities you may think proper to communicate. Hoping also, in a short time, to have the greater pleasure of seeing you again at the Vicarage;

I remain, my dear friend,

Yours very affectionately,

May 17.

W. A. Ward.

CHAP. VIII.

Deeply as Mr. and Mrs. Glenville were affected by the disclosure of their son's scepticism, there was one family on whom it made, if possible, a still deeper impression. There was one individual, pious, amiable, and affectionate, whose happiness was more seriously injured by the change. She had agreed to blend her destinies with the subject of this memoir, at a time when his views, his character, and his prospects, accorded with her wishes, and justified the hope of a cordial and happy union. He was then a believer in our holy religion. His disposition was kind, and his morals irreproachable. His piety appeared to be sincere, and even fervent. In his connexions, his taste, his manners, and his profession, there was every thing to meet the views, and win the affections of Lavinia.

But now every thing seemed to be reversed. The prospects of nuptial felicity, which had opened

with unusual brilliance, were suddenly beclouded. The change which had taken place in his creed and character, destroyed the foundation of hope, and prevented the possibility of a cordial union. The shock was too severe to be borne! the thought too painful to be cherished! It was the first trial she had experienced, and she scarcely knew how to bear it with fortitude, though she afterwards rose superior to the trouble.

The correspondence of Glenville with Miss Randolph, for some months previous to the disclosure of his scepticism, had become less satisfactory. His letters ceased to breathe those pure and lofty sentiments, which he had often coupled with expressions of regard and other ordinary topics of literary courtship. His allusions to religion had lately indicated a kind of levity, bordering on profaneness, to which he had previously discovered no tendency. He likewise wrote with less regularity, and, as Lavinia sometimes thought, with less warmth and tenderness. His mode of expression sometimes seemed cool and mysterious, which she was unable to account for. She was unconscious of any thing on her own part, that could occasion the least diminution of regard; and the high opinion she had of his character, repelled

the most distant suspicion of any thing dishonourable or capricious.

But the disclosure of his infidel opinions, removed the veil, and explained the mystery. Lavinia saw at once the fearful magnitude of his error, and the inroads it had already made on the noblest and best feelings of his heart. She perceived with the deepest regret, that his brightest virtues were already withering, and would soon perish under the chilling blast of scepticism. With the benevolence of a christian, she could not help shedding many a tear over the fatal change, on his own account merely as a friend. What then must have been her feelings and her tears, when it involved consequences so alarming to herself, and required the dissolution of an attachment, from which she was looking for the highest sublunary bliss? It was the trial of her faith and piety as a christian; a test to determine the important fact, whether principle or passion, duty or interest, love to God or love to man, the happiness of eternity, or the pleasures of time, were the chief motive. The conflict was severe, but it was soon decided. She allowed no compromise with the dictates of conscience, and the honour of religion. The claims of her Saviour were paramount to all others.

And she determined to sacrifice an attachment, in which the strongest and tenderest feelings of nature were engaged, rather than expose to jeopardy the nobler, more sacred, and more enduring interests of the soul.

In the mean time, Mr. and Mrs. Randolph scarcely know how to act for the best, or what advice they should give Lavinia. While Glenville retained sentiments so antichristian, it was impossible for them to sanction the correspondence, or indulge the hope of a favourable result. Nor could Lavinia continue it with any degree of intimacy, without exposing her peace of mind, her religious principles, and final happiness to the greatest peril. Nothing, indeed, was further from their intentions, than the idea of controlling the affections of a beloved child, or of dissolving by parental authority, a connexion so auspiciously commenced. But they conceived it would be a criminal neglect of duty, and a species of refined cruelty, under the mask of tenderness, to withhold suitable advice in a case of so much difficulty and importance. At the same time they were confident, that if Lavinia's attachment was too strong to be easily broken, her piety also was too decided to think of consummating her union with an un-

believer. They likewise felt greatly concerned for Mr. and Mrs. Glenville, lest the measure which appeared most advisable, should wound their feelings, and impair the friendship which had long subsisted between the families.

Mr. Randolph therefore hastened to the Lodge, and had an interview with his esteemed friends on the subject. He found them deeply lamenting the delusions which had drawn Howard from the truth, viewing the subject in its gloomiest light, and fearing its worst consequences. They were alarmed at the effect it might have on his future connexions and prospects, deranging all their plans, and disappointing the fairest hopes of his respectability and happiness. And with this impression, Mr. Glenville anticipated one object of Mr. Randolph's visit, and seemed anxious to relieve any embarrassment or hesitation he might feel respecting Lavinia.

"I thank you, my kind friend," said he, "for your seasonable condolence. We are, indeed, as you perceive, overwhelmed with grief at the disclosure of our son's infidelity. It has blasted our fairest hopes respecting him, and given, I fear, a fatal wound to his own happiness and ours. What can we expect as the just consequence of so awful

a dereliction of principle, so rash an abandonment of the best of causes, but a course of moral delinquency, or a state of judicial blindness and fatal obduracy, the fearful presage of greater evil, unless prevented by providential severities ! On his own account, therefore, we cannot help feeling the most poignant distress and alarm, whether we consider the nature of infidel opinions, or the pernicious effects generally resulting from their indulgence. But we feel, if possible, still more anxiety on account of Lavinia, lest her mind should be distressed, and her health impaired, by the disappointment. But you, my dear friend, as a christian parent, cannot, under these circumstances, sanction the acquaintance. And I presume, Lavinia herself will see the necessity of its discontinuance."

"We have not yet ascertained Lavinia's mind respecting it," replied Mr. Randolph; "although we fear the course you have named, must be deemed a measure of indispensable though painful necessity. But in giving this advice, we trust it will in no respect appear dishonourable, or be thought to indicate any want of regard for your feelings, already wounded so severely. Sorry beyond expression should I be, if any misunder-

standing between the young people, from whose attachment we expected much pleasure, should in the least impair the warm and steady friendship which has so many years subsisted between us."

"Be assured, my dear friend," rejoined Mr. Glenville, "you have no cause for apprehension on that score. Our friendship would be too dearly purchased, if we required you, as the term of its continuance, to sacrifice your duty as christian parents, or to risk the happiness of a beloved child. You know how cordially we approved the acquaintance, and with what pleasure we were looking forward to so valuable an alliance with your family. But we must now submit, I fear, to relinquish the gratifying prospect. Were I the father of Lavinia, I should most certainly feel myself bound as a christian parent to give this advice, whatever might be the consequence. You cannot, therefore, be supposed, my dear Sir, to aggravate our sufferings by performing a sacred duty, although we deplore the circumstance which has made it necessary."

"My dear friend," answered Mr. Randolph, "you are too generous, too kind! I am overcome by a sense of your goodness! If any thing more had been requisite to heighten and perpetuate my esteem for you, now so long cherished, the senti-

ments you have expressed, would have been sufficient. Your approbation of the acquaintance could not have been more cordial than ours. And though, under existing circumstances, it may be discontinued, let us indulge the hope that a gracious Providence may yet restore Howard to the faith he has so unaccountably forsaken, and in due time bring about the consummation of our wishes."

"Would to God," replied Mr. Glenville, "there were a solid foundation for this hope! It is cheering even to think of it; and perhaps this gloomy event, painful as it is, may be designed by a mysterious Providence to answer some valuable end to both families. How anxious we are to penetrate the undisclosed secrets of fatality, which divine wisdom has mercifully concealed. To distrust Providence, or to despair of a favourable result, even in this case, would be a mark of ingratitude and unbelief. At least, it may serve to teach us more forcibly, the necessity of prayer, and the sweetness of hope."

"I am charmed with the idea," said Mr. Randolph. "While we have this resort, let us not fear. With this sentiment I must bid you adieu. Already I begin to feel its exhilarating effect, and shall return to my family more than ever impressed

with the necessity of prayer, and the sweetness of hope." So saying, he again and again shook hands with his esteemed friends, and returned.

Mrs. Randolph soon afterwards embraced an opportunity of conversing with her daughter on the painful topic, with a view to prepare her for the result. "I perceive by your appearance, my dear Lavinia," said she, "that your recent communications from Glenville, have deeply affected you. His adoption of infidel opinions is no less unexpected than distressing. It has given myself and your papa more uneasiness, than any event we have met with for years. We feel for you, my dear, most tenderly, and hope you will be enabled to bear the disappointment with the fortitude of a christian, and with humble resignation to the divine will,"

Lavinia burst into tears, and for some minutes was unable to give utterance to her thoughts. "Do not distress yourself too much, Lavinia," continued her beloved mother; "nor think we would on any account do violence to your feelings. We are not insensible to the warmth of your attachment, nor so unreasonable as to suppose it can be easily dissolved. Do not, therefore, think that we shall insist upon your declining all further corres-

pendence with Howard, or that we would advise it immediately, unless your own judgment shall perceive it to be right."

"My dear mamma," replied Lavinia, "do not imagine that my distress arises from any such fear. I have had too many proofs of your tenderness, to suppose that you could advise any thing, but with a view to my true happiness, or that your parental authority will ever assume an aspect of severity. I am sure you will grant me all the indulgence my weak mind can desire; and I could willingly leave you to decide this painful case for me. My distress must therefore be imputed to the circumstance itself, and the sacrifice I must make on the altar of duty. I will not conceal the strength of my attachment to Howard, and the fond hope of nuptial felicity which has glowed within me, and flattered my imagination with its gay but delusive visions. But I am now ready to resign it all to the authority of conscience. My mind is made up respecting it, and on my own account I have no scruples. It is certainly better for me to relinquish the dearest object of earthly affection, than expose myself to the fearful consequences of a union from which the faith and hope and influence of the gospel might be exiled for ever. But I fear

my conduct may be deemed dishonourable, be imputed to wrong motives, or wound the feelings of Mr. and Mrs. Glenville."

"Your sentiments, my dear Lavinia," replied her mother, "afford me entire satisfaction. Your dear papa will be delighted to find that you view the subject in so just a light, and have come to this noble determination. And from his last interview with our esteemed friends at the Lodge, I am happy to assure you, there is nothing to be feared on their account. Our ideas respecting this sad affair are perfectly harmonious; and we all think the acquaintance must be dropped, at least for the present. And certainly no considerate person can think your conduct in any respect dishonourable or capricious. Had you transferred your affections to another, or from any change of mind, wished to terminate the correspondence, the case would have worn a very different aspect. But I believe all our connexions will exonerate you from the least tendency to those habits of levity and fickleness, cherished by many of our sex, in their early correspondence with gentlemen from whom they receive any flattering attentions. And in the present case, the change is not in yourself, but in Howard, who has renounced the principles

and manners which first won your confidence, and has therefore no right to charge you with instability. Since then you are led by a principle of religious duty to suspend the acquaintance, all must commend your integrity and the strength of your resolution. Some, indeed, will question its necessity, and deem it an evidence of undue scrupulosity, a rigid adherence to principles, seldom thought of in modern alliances, and in some cases scorned even by christian families, as the relics of a superstitious and illiberal age. But if we do what is right, the consequences may be safely left to divine Providence."

"On that point," replied Lavinia, "I have no fears. We must not look to the world for the rule of life, nor appeal to its opinions as the test of right conduct. My great concern is to follow the dictates of my own conscience, enlightened and controlled by the word of God. I am glad you think me incapable of flirting and caprice, and hope I shall never forfeit your good opinion. But time alone can disengage my affections from Howard, whom I once deemed worthy of the tenderest regard. I have no wish to transfer them to another, nor any anxiety to shorten my abode with parents, endeared by unnumbered favours,

who have shewn so much concern for my welfare, and in whose society I am most happy. And if a life of celibacy with religion, or a nuptial union without it, were the only alternative, I trust my heart would not indulge a moment's hesitation in the choice. As to Glenville himself, I don't think he can question my motives, or charge me with undue severity. Indeed, I sometimes suspect that he may even wish to have the acquaintance dissolved, though a sense of honour might forbid the proposal. His new principles and companions must render the society of his christian friends irksome, if not disgusting to him ; and he will, perhaps, be glad to have his connexion with a pious family broken off by their own choice. But if these suspicions are unfounded, and he should think me wrong, or wish to continue the acquaintance, time may rectify the mistake, and from present difficulties lead to a more favourable result."

Mrs. Randolph having informed her husband of this interview, it was agreed that Mr. Randolph should write to Glenville on the subject, and inclose a letter also from Lavinia. The following letters were accordingly despatched.

Mr. Randolph to Howard Glenville.

My dear Friend,

It is with extreme reluctance I find myself constrained to write to you on a subject no less painful to my own feelings than to yours. I should be sorry for a moment to indulge in harsh reflections, or to use language tinged with severity towards any one; much less towards a young friend who has been so highly esteemed, and so intimately connected with the family. But in consequence of your recent communications, I am compelled by a sense of duty, and by a sacred regard for the best interest of a beloved child, to trouble you with a free and undisguised expression of my sentiments. I have been led to this measure, after a long and anxious deliberation, with the entire concurrence of Mrs. Randolph, Lavinia, and your honoured parents, whom I deemed it necessary to consult in this unhappy affair. ©

When the report first reached us, that you had formed an intimacy with certain colleagues of doubtful character and atheistical opinions, calling themselves a society of freethinkers; and that you

had so far imbibed the same sentiments, as to question, if not openly deny, the truth and divine authority of the christian doctrine; though unable to account for the rumour, we deemed it impossible to be true. Your early education; the pious and exemplary conduct of your esteemed parents; the sense of religion which you discovered in early life; the consistency of your general conduct; and your early choice of the ministerial profession, with other considerations of a pleasing nature, combined to forbid the most distant fear of your departure from the truth. Thinking favourably of your prudence also, and confiding in the stability of your religious principles, we considered the report absolutely incredible, and believed a few days would be sufficient to repel the charge, and remove the anxiety of your connexions.

But your ingenuous answers to the inquiries proposed by Lavinia in her last letter, have removed all uncertainty, and confirmed the mysterious rumour. I do not mean to condemn your candour, in the undisguised confession of your present views, but wish it had been called forth in a better cause. But it is in vain to question the fact any longer. We can only lament your fall, while we tender you our best advice, and offer our fervent

prayers to the Spirit of truth, for your speedy restoration to the faith so unaccountably abandoned.

At the same time, you must be aware, Howard, that a change of views so extraordinary, has given your former friends the greatest uneasiness, and will impair the confidence and esteem, so essential to real friendship. With respect to Lavinia in particular, you will perceive from the inclosed letter, that she has deemed it an indispensable though painful duty, under existing circumstances, to propose terminating your acquaintance, since she could not think of marrying an avowed unbeliever, though the connexion in other respects were perfectly unexceptionable. The determination she has formed on this ground, meets the entire approbation of myself and Mrs. Randolph, and is precisely what we should have deemed it our duty to advise, had she not been led to it by her own reflections. And I flatter myself your own judgment, after due consideration, will acknowledge it to be right.

It must be acknowledged that we live in an age when secular interests are the chief if not the only things considered, in forming matrimonial connexions; while the religious views of the parties is the

last circumstance taken into consideration, even by families making some pretensions to religion. You will, therefore, probably think my opinion too narrow for the liberality of the age, a scrupulosity which indicates the want of a candid and enlightened spirit. But from all that I have seen of the world, and from every view that I can take of the subject, I am persuaded that nothing is more essential to human happiness, and especially the happiness of married people, than the habitual influence of religion, combined with unanimity in their religious sentiments.

The manner in which the sacred writer describes the original institution of marriage, when we are told the first human pair were made *to be helps meet for each other*, evidently implies that similarity of disposition, and the mutual influence of the same religious feelings, were deemed necessary to the cordiality and permanent happiness of the union. When the people of Israel were rescued from Egyptian slavery, and placed under a code of laws introduced and maintained by divine authority, they were strictly forbidden to form alliances with atheists and idolaters, and commanded to intermarry with their own tribes, and with persons attached to the same system. And though many

gross deviations from this law took place in the course of their history, especially when commerce and wealth had corrupted their religion, the pernicious consequences resulting from thence, both to their moral and civil interests, sufficiently proved the prohibition to be wise and salutary. In the new testament likewise, so far as the subject is introduced, the same principles are strongly recommended. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," is the injunction of St. Paul. "For, what communion hath light with darkness? what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what fellowship hath a believer with an infidel? Let those who marry, therefore, marry only in the Lord."

To you, indeed, with your present views, this appeal to scripture will be of no weight. It will rather excite a smile of pity and contempt. But as the scriptures appear to me of divine authority, I cannot willingly slight any of their injunctions, but receive them as the rule of life, in this, no less than in other branches of morality. And you must yourself admit, that, while we retain this conviction, it would be on open contempt of sacred authority, a shameful dereliction of principle, were we to sanction an alliance which we conceived to

be repugnant both to the letter and spirit of the divine law. You must, therefore, justify Lavinia's conduct in this case, on the ground of consistency as a christian, while she retains those views of scripture which you had formerly the happiness to maintain.

It is indeed acknowledged by all parties, that similarity of temper, taste, and manners, is indispensable to the happiness of married persons. Amidst the numerous trials and unavoidable infirmities of our nature, even in the most favoured state of life, how can mutual forbearance and co-operation be preserved in one steady and unruffled course, unless there be the greatest congeniality of thought and feeling in every important concern.

In what respect, then, can the influence of a congenial mind be of more consequence, than in religion? This is not a point of secondary interest, that may be safely passed over, or in which a strict neutrality and perfect indifference can be maintained. From the constitution of our nature as rational and accountable beings, we must have some thoughts and feelings of a religious nature, true or false, friendly or adverse, beneficial or pernicious. And the notions that appear most

plausible, in proportion as they become fixed principles, will, from the necessity of nature, often shew themselves in an active form, and exert a commanding influence. Even atheists themselves, when they renounce the worship and being of the true God, evince the same principle, by deifying some ideal cause which they style *Nature*, and by referring to some indefinite abstraction of reason, as their supreme law, the standard of good and evil. Persons sunk in profound ignorance, and having no definite ideas or feelings of a religious kind, may doubtless live together without dissension, and in the absence of religion, enjoy as much happiness as their entire vacuity of intellect will admit. But persons of education and reading, whose minds have once been imbued with religious sentiments, can never sink into the idiocy of atheism, or the perfect quietude of religious indifference. It would, therefore, be the height of infatuation for a pious female, who firmly believes in the religion of Christ, and would enjoy its privileges undisturbed, to become the wife of an infidel or a sceptic.

To me it appears most desirable, that married people should be of the same mind, even in the minuter points of their religion. When I see them

adopting different creeds, connected with different sects, and attending different places of worship, it always strikes me as a repulsive and unchristian spectacle. Nor can these differences exist to any great extent without impairing their happiness. In many cases, it excites a perpetual sense of disunion, and keeps alive the unhallowed fire of angry passions and party prejudices, scarcely less fatal to the tender affections, than secret antipathy and open strife. And in other cases, where difference of sentiment is borne with greater liberality and meekness, it weakens or destroys some of the chief means of sacred pleasure and christian improvement; insomuch that, instead of "being helpers of each other's faith and joy," their progress in the christian life is mutually retarded. What then can be expected, when a christian of strong faith and piety is wedded to an unbeliever? When so manifest an incongruity takes place after the solemnization of their union, it is the christian's duty to bear the cross with meekness and wisdom. But to form a connexion so incongruous, would evince the greatest temerity and imprudence, not to say folly and sin.

Christianity is indeed a system of the noblest philanthropy, and inclines us to cherish sentiments

of kindness toward all men. But it forbids an improper intimacy and confidential intercourse with persons of depraved morals or antichristian principles. In proportion as we believe the gospel, and are alive to its influence, it will endear to us the character and society of kindred minds. Persons of steady faith and exemplary conduct, will be esteemed the excellent of the earth, among whom alone true friendship, in its purest and best operations, can be found. How then is it possible that Lavinia, who has always been attached to christian society, and still cherishes the same preference, should choose an unbeliever as her bosom friend, become the companion of his private hours, and offer the most solemn vows of a cordial and inviolable attachment? For though the preservation of religious feeling in such a state might be possible, the choice of it would be a virtual dereliction of its authority.

Indeed, Howard, I cannot help suspecting that you must secretly wish to drop the acquaintance, if it could be done without subjecting you to any dishonourable imputation. If your present views and associates have produced their legitimate effect on the mind, you will naturally become indifferent and even averse to the society of re-

reflections, and still more painful result, which your late extraordinary and alarming change of views has occasioned. Whatever events imagination may have sometimes pictured, as the probable means of terminating our acquaintance, this was the remotest from my thoughts. I am willing to allow great latitude of opinion, and would indulge a candid spirit toward persons of all persuasions. Yet, I do not see how it is possible for two persons to walk together in a state of conjugal felicity, unless they are agreed in embracing the same religion, if not the same view of its forms and doctrines. The termination of our acquaintance, as to any ulterior design of a more intimate union, must therefore be deemed an unavoidable consequence.

Do not, I entreat you, Howard, impute this proposal to any thing like caprice, nor suppose that my regard for you personally has undergone any change. Though I despise an affectation of superior virtue, and make no pretensions to greater prudence than the generality of my own sex, yet I trust you can never suspect me of insincerity, nor think me capable of transferring my affections, or my company, in a moment of levity and caprice, from one gentleman to another. I am now free

to confess, that nothing but a sincere personal attachment could have induced me to accept your flattering attentions, and consent to so intimate a correspondence, in prospect of a more sacred and lasting union. And though I must now consent to relinquish this prospect, time alone can diminish the warmth of my affections, or reconcile my feelings to the loss; while your image, the image of what you once were, when I had the fullest confidence in your virtue and piety, will still live in my remembrance, and go with me to the grave.

But in making this confession, as a pledge of my sincerity, I am constrained by the purest dictates of conscience, and the paramount authority of religion, to dissolve a connexion from which I had fondly anticipated the greatest earthly happiness. From the view I now have of the subject, it would be a direct and impious violation of the divine law, in open defiance of my own convictions, were I to unite with you in the solemn bonds of marriage, while you deny the authority of the gospel, and retain the sentiments of an unbeliever. It would, therefore, be absurd and dissembling to continue an expectation, which it would be impossible for me to realize. "Whosoever loveth father or mother, son or daughter, wife or husband, more

vigilance and piety. The want of this would be sufficient to forbid the union, if there were no ground for alarm on the score of secret hostility and moral danger ; which, in the present case, I am not credulous enough to believe.

If I had more confidence in my own resolution and moral ascendancy, these difficulties might perhaps be diminished and removed. If I had no fear on my own account, and could hope to be the means of restoring you to the truth, my regard for your best interests, as well as my affection, would constrain me to prolong the acquaintance. But what argument could I adduce in favour of christianity, or what motive to a christian life could I urge on your attention, over which your scepticism has not already triumphed ? To indulge the hope of your recovery by any means I could use, would be a vain and self-deceiving presumption. A sense of my own fallibility and weakness would rather awaken the fear, that our union, instead of restoring your faith, would undermine the stability of my own ; while the disappointment of my assumptions, might otherwise overwhelm me with misery and shame. It is then wiser and more safe to pursue the plain path of duty, though it requires me to sacrifice a connexion on which my

warmest affections and brightest hopes have been placed.

But if all these fears were groundless, and our union could be prolonged for years without any unpleasant dissension, what would be our feelings in the prospect of its final close? On your system, there could be no hope of its renewal in a state of superior existence after death, but we must go down to the grave in despair, as the end of our being, the everlasting extinction of our happiness. And if the hope of glory in reference to myself, were sustained by an unwavering faith in the truth and promises of the gospel, it must also be accompanied with the most distressing fears on your account; pointing in either case to the tomb as the termination of our union *for ever*. But how could I endure the thought, or what solace could allay its anguish? Oh! it would darken our fairest prospects, and infuse into the cup of happiness, a poison sufficient to neutralize and embitter its sweetest ingredients.

But in closing this letter, permit me, Howard, again to assure you that I shall long cherish the remembrance of your friendship, and daily offer my most fervent prayers to the Father of Lights, for your true happiness. And if, at any time, you

bend the knee at the throne of his heavenly grace, or recall the memory of departed years, in which religion was the companion of your happiest hours, let those be the moments in which you retain some remembrance of

Your affectionate friend,

May 9th.

Lavinia.

Glenville was deeply affected with the contents of these letters. The resolution of Lavinia overwhelmed him with confusion and regret. The current of emotion rose and swelled with extreme agitation. At first, all his tenderness for Lavinia revived, and he felt the keenness and severity of the disappointment. Then the blush of conscious guilt overspread his countenance, when he thought of the high ground from which he had fallen, and the wound he had given to his friends. And then again, his vanity severely mortified awakened feelings of resentment, and he began to think of a prompt and angry reply.

At this moment his friend Mortimer entered the room, and seeing him more confused than usual, inquired the cause of his agitation, and attempted to recall his former cheerfulness. Observing Lavinia's letter lying upon the table, with the signa-

ture exposed, he took it up, and hastily glanced over its contents, at the same time apologizing for his rudeness, which a friendship so intimate as theirs would excuse. Perceiving that Glenville was not a little vexed and mortified, he poured out a strain of the bitterest invectives against the letter, as a compound of insolence and superstition. "Oh," said he, "if this be your favourite Lavinia, good bye to her! Upon my word, Glenville, I thought you had more sense than to fall in love with such an illiberal soul. Well, I am glad you may now get rid of the acquaintance upon honourable terms. And so she assigns us all to perdition, does she? Let me look again; aye, it is even so: she has not the least hope of you! Upon my honour, Glenville, she is a rank methodist! the quintessence of bigotry! a perfect intolerant! the very spirit of an inquisitor! Verily, if she were wiser than Minerva, and more beautiful than Venus, I would as soon connect myself with Proserpine, or marry one of the Furies. End the acquaintance? yes, and give her a good trouncing to boot! Well, what do you mean to say to it? Have the spirit of a man, Howard, and let Mr. and Miss Randolph know, that you have no wish to be again troubled with their pious effusions."

Following the impulse of these feelings, Glenville wrote a brief reply to Lavinia, conceived in a bad spirit, and expressed in contemptuous language. It merely stated that he was more surprized than grieved at the purport of her letter, and thought she had not been capable of any thing so unhand-some and illiberal. But if her attachment was feeble enough to be dissolved by so slight a cause, it was doubtless better to terminate the acquaintance. He thanked Mr. Randolph for his laboured epistle and good wishes, and according to the r desire, would now close the correspondence.

But when he had despatched the letter, and spent a short time in calm and solitary reflection, the effervescence of anger subsided, better feelings resumed their influence, and he began to realize all the symptoms of returning tenderness. Memory vividly recalled the delightful hours he had spent in the company of Lavinia, and the many charms personal and moral, which entitled her to his affection. This again revived the recollection of former years, when he enjoyed the calmness and satisfaction of a christian, free from distressing doubts and the rebukes of a guilty conscience. Then he compared the character of his early friends, whose confidence he had now forfeited,

with the frivolous companions of his infidelity; and from the remarkable and humiliating contrast, perceived for a moment the depth of his fall, and the magnitude of his privations. He now felt all the bitterness of remorse, and reproached himself for his precipitancy and petulance. He longed to recall his answer to Lavinia, and half resolved to write another filled with apologies and protestations of attachment. He took the pen, commenced his recantation, laid it aside in suspense, resumed it again, added a few more sentences, changed his mind again, and committed it to the flames. "Ah!" said he to himself in an agony of self-reproach, "it is too late! The mischief is done, and there is no remedy! To disown the letter, or plead rashness and irritation, will only proclaim my folly, and render my character more contemptible. It is too late to repent, and I must bear the consequence! O folly! madness! I am lost! I am lost!"

CHAP. IX.

THE communications contained in the preceding chapters, left a powerful impression on the mind of Glenville, and tended in some degree, to restore his moral sensibility to its proper tone. The motives which influenced his correspondents were so pure and so generous, that his respect for them was secretly increased, even while some of their remarks mortified his pride, and alarmed his prejudices. He felt himself suddenly arrested in his favourite career. The confidence with which he had embraced and openly acknowledged the boasted philosophy of his infidel companions, was shaken to its foundation. A secret suspicion that he had become the victim of a delusive and even fatal theory, stole across his mind, and compelled him to censure and deplore his late precipitancy. Sometimes he felt the force and beauty of the sentiments recommended to his attention, and re-

membered with a sigh of regret the sacred satisfaction he had lost. And as his mind became more susceptible of just views and right feelings, events in providence conspired with his own reflections, to strengthen the impressions he had just received, and to revive the more pleasing recollections of former years.

While he was one evening walking in St. James's Park, and pensively considering his own difficulties, he saw at a little distance, a person of whom he thought he had some remembrance, pacing backwards and forwards with much agitation, sometimes striking his breast and his forehead, and then reclining in a melancholy posture, under one of the trees. Though his dress and appearance indicated the most abject poverty, there was something in his manner like the remains of better fortune. His countenance was pale, and his whole frame emaciated, like a person just released from the gloomy cell of a dungeon, or reduced to the last stage of a consumption. And yet from the wildness of his looks, and the singularity of his movements, he was evidently labouring under mental distress, and seemed to have become the victim of some extraordinary misfortune, which impaired his reason, and required the sympathy of his friends.

The stranger, observing that he was noticed, changed his position, as though he wished to be concealed ; and supporting his forehead with his hand, seemed to be absorbed in the most intense meditations. He was, in fact, a person of superior accomplishments and respectable connexions, to whom the subject of these memoirs had been introduced at the commencement of his acquaintance with Charles Mortimer ; who had several times spoken at their meetings with great applause ; but of whose subsequent misfortunes he had heard some indistinct rumour. Having watched his motions for some time with great interest, and feeling satisfied that he was not mistaken in his person, Glenville approached the spot where he was sitting, and apologizing for the intrusion, begged to introduce himself to his notice.

“ I think, sir,” said he, “ if I am not deceived, I have had the pleasure of seeing you before, in more favourable circumstances. From your appearance, I fear you have met with some heavy misfortune, which preys upon your spirits, and has already undermined the vigour of your constitution. And under this impression, recollecting your former appearance, I feel an interest in your fate which compels me to interrupt your solitary reflections.”

"I am obliged to you, sir, for your kind intentions," replied the stranger; "but you must certainly be mistaken respecting me. My fate, sir, has been an unfortunate one, cruel and intolerable in the extreme. But I am not in circumstances to be known by an ordinary acquaintance, and I could scarcely fail to recognize a friend. Probably some slight resemblance to the person whom you suppose me to be, may have misled your judgment, as from your style of expression, I believe you are too generous to insult the misery of a stranger."

"If, sir, I am not speaking to Mr. Burford," answered Glenville, "I will offer a thousand apologies for the intrusion. Your countenance has undergone a material change since I last had the pleasure of seeing you; but the impression of your features is too strong for me to be deceived. I certainly must have seen you twelve months ago, in company with my friend Charles Mortimer; and cannot forget the part you then took in some interesting discussions. I sincerely sympathize in your misfortunes; and if there be any thing in which I can render you any assistance, you may command my services at any time. A true friend is best known in adversity."

"Your kindness, sir, quite overcomes me," said the stranger, "I confess you are right. My name is James Burford. At least, sir, I am the shadow of the person whom you once knew under that name. I partly recognized your features when you first addressed me, and ought to beg your pardon for attempting to conceal the fact. But the wretchedness of my condition must excuse me. My acquaintance with Mortimer and his party has been broken off by the most cruel reverses; and I have no wish for the notice of former friends, with whom I can no longer mingle on equal terms. But your generosity deeply affects me, and inspires a feeling of confidence, which it would be ungenerous to disown. I once thought too favourably of mankind, and used to speak of friendship with enthusiasm. My attachments were ardent, my confidence unreserved, and my hopes sanguine; and the name of a friend, like an enchanter's spell, was irresistible. But in my misfortunes I have found them perfidious. The desertion and cruelty of pretended friends, have annihilated the charm, and rendered my heart callous to the sentiments of friendship. The very name is become dissonant and offensive. And yet, sir, the notice you have taken of me in this

miserable plight, compels me to admit the possibility of disinterested kindness, and forbids me to conceal my misfortunes, though I know them to be incapable of relief."

"I sincerely lament your case, sir," answered Glenville, "and the effect it has had upon your feelings. The world's selfishness and perfidy are proverbial. At least, it has always appeared so to the unfortunate; and, perhaps, adversity is the only school in which the hollowness and vanity of many pretended friendships can be learnt; the only theatre in which the generality of men appear in their true character. But you must not pass the same sweeping sentence upon all, nor think because some have deceived you, others are incapable of sincerity. You must not close the avenues of your bosom against the endearments of friendship, nor resign yourself to a gloomy misanthropy. Even when misfortunes are incapable of relief, their severity may be soothed, and the mind fortified under them, by the sympathies of a friend. And though I would not intrude upon the privacy of your affairs, of which I remember to have heard some vague report, I cannot imagine them to be irretrievable, but hope the clouds which have gathered over you, will soon be dispersed."

“Hope, sir,” answered Burford, “has long been effaced from my vocabulary. If you knew the history of my reverses, you would see that my condition is perfectly forlorn, and that I have drunk of the cup of misery to the very dregs. Seven years ago, I came to Town by the particular request of an uncle, a man of good property, and largely occupied in commercial concerns. Having lost his only son, he received me with the kindness of a father, and promised me a large share of his estate. When I had gone through the initiatory process, and made myself master of the business, he placed me in a confidential situation, and after a year or two, left his affairs in a great measure to my control. For some time things went on to our mutual satisfaction, and I had few difficulties to encounter. But being of a gay turn, wishing to see more of the world, and having a handsome salary at my disposal, I formed an intimacy with several young men of fashion, besides Mortimer, and others of your acquaintance. My vanity being gratified, I devoted myself to their society with unbounded confidence. My inexperience exposed me to deception, and I was soon made the victim of credulity and fraud. My habits now became too expensive for my resources, and having sus-

tained some heavy losses at play, I was at last involved in the most tormenting embarrassments. As a temporary relief, I adopted the expedient of drawing bills on my uncle's account, not doubting but I should manage to discharge them when they became due without his knowledge."

"That was a most hazardous expedient," interrupted Glenville; "I wonder you should resort to it. You are aware that the law in such cases is evaded with extreme difficulty, and when conviction takes place, the executive is inexorable. There have been several instances in which persons of the most respectable connexions, presuming on the secrecy of their transactions, resorted to this expedient without intending to defraud, but upon the disclosure of their affairs, were abandoned by their friends, and left to suffer the full penalty of the law. Would it not have been more effectual, as well as safer, to have disclosed your embarrassments to Mr. Burford, and to have cast yourself without reserve on his generosity and affection?"

"That would have been much the wisest course, I confess," added Burford. "But in doing that, I must have sacrificed the connexions I had formed, and most likely lost the entire confidence

of my uncle. The scheme I adopted was, I acknowledge, extremely hazardous, and though often resorted to, is infinitely tormenting and ineffectual. But it was the only expedient I could think of at the time, without relinquishing my connexions, and altering my style of living, to which I then felt an unconquerable aversion. I was not fully aware of the danger, and a friend whom I consulted in the business, promised to assist me through its difficulties. For some months I contrived to discharge the bills with considerable facility; and though my uncle sometimes appeared more cool and distant in his manners, and often expostulated with me on the score of my extravagance and the character of my companions, yet I believe he had no suspicion of any thing illegal in my transactions. But having taken an excursion into the country, and met with an accident which detained me there some weeks, several bills were dishonoured, and the whole business laid open to my uncle's astonishment. He was perfectly enraged at the discovery; and though I wrote to him in the most submissive strain, and stated the affair in the most favourable light I could, yet he still remained inexorable. After some hesitation he acknowledged and dis-

charged the bills, so as to relieve me from the penal consequences of my imprudence, but at the same time, discharged me from his confidence and service for ever. I was thus cast upon the world, without resources, without friends, without a character, and without the prospect of any sphere, however obscure or insignificant, in which my talents could be successfully employed. All my attempts to gain a competent support have failed. No means of effectual relief have presented themselves. My former companions, who shared in my prosperity, have all forsaken me. My life is become a burden and a torment; and unless a change of fortune speedily take place, of which I have no expectation, I will soon release myself from its miseries, and quit a stage where nothing but disappointment and indignity await me."

"I deplore your misfortunes," replied Glenville, "and wish I could suggest some method of relief. But, viewing your circumstances in the worst light, it is irrational despair. Changes are constantly taking place in human affairs; and the means of relief and prosperity, are sometimes as sudden and unexpected as the reverse. It is more manly, my friend; to bear afflictions with

un-repining fortitude, than to sink under them; to buffet the waves of adverse fortune, than to be swept away without resistance by the first surge. I can scarcely believe it possible that a man of your attainments, with a mind so cultivated and vigorous, and so long accustomed to think and judge for yourself, should become the victim of unmanly despair. Prudence and resolution are no doubt necessary to conquer the difficulties which beset you, and to regain the station in society you have lost. But with these, sir, you remember the maxim of the wise, has always been, "*nil desperandum.*"

"Ah! my friend," said Burford, "it is easier to approve and recommend these sentiments, when every thing is prosperous, than to feel and act upon them in distress. With respect to myself they are perfectly futile. It is impossible for a person circumstanced as you are, to appreciate my feelings. Mine is a case of unparalleled misfortune. Every object around torments me. I meet with nothing but insult and misery. My pride is mortified by every thing I see and hear. I have nothing in prospect worth living for. I can do no good by living much longer, and like the noble-minded Cato, I am resolved to die."

“My dear fellow,” answered Glenville, “you are now speaking rhapsodically. Your good sense forbids me to believe you can be in earnest. Surely you do not mean to become an apologist for suicides! In the conduct of the noble-minded Cato, as you style him, I see nothing to admire, much less to recommend. In my opinion, he would have acted a wiser part, and more entitled to the honour of posterity, had he borne his reverses with fortitude, and preserved his life for the service of the republic. By accepting the terms offered by his adversary, who felt the profoundest respect for his character and talents, he might in all probability have moderated Cæsar’s power, and rescued the liberties of his country, as well as the happiness of his friends, from final ruin. I cannot, therefore, speak of his fate with applause. Indeed, I wonder any man should speak of suicide as an heroic or virtuous deed. As we have not given ourselves life, and have no power to restore it when suspended, I cannot think we have any right to dispose of it at discretion. But, to say nothing of its criminality on moral grounds, I cannot help thinking it always indicates a cowardly and mean spirit, which sinks under difficulties, instead of the true magnanimity which overcomes them by

too volatile a nature to depend on the stability of externals. It often survives the means of its own enjoyment, and finds a congenial element where it was threatened with extinction. And in your own case, having only yourself to support, you have only to bring your mind to your condition, and you will soon find a sufficiency."

"Only myself to support! did you say, Glenville?" interrupted he. "Were that the case, there would be some force in your reasoning. I might then subsist on a little, rather than sink at once into the grave. But, in falling from affluence to penury, I have involved a wife and two children in the same wretchedness. I could bear my own misery with composure; but the sight of theirs, without the hope of its removal, is intolerable."

"That is an additional misfortune," answered Glenville, "of which I was not aware. But, my dear fellow, the claims due to your wife and children, should prompt you to greater exertions on their behalf. If, on your own account, life has no charms, the hope of doing something for their happiness must give it an infinite value. Their affection will reward you a thousand fold."

"That I acknowledge," answered Burford, somewhat affected. "But the current of love has

been frozen by adversity, and my heart is insensible to the social and tender affections. To the estimable character and domestic assiduities of my unfortunate wife, justice compels me to bear a willing testimony. Our attachment, which commenced early, was at first enthusiastic, and for a time, seemed to promise the most exquisite felicity. But the obstinacy of her religious prejudices, afterwards became a source of incessant vexation and dispute. All my attempts to give her more liberal ideas, have failed; and though I cannot say that the difference in our ways of thinking, produced any change in her behaviour, it sensibly diminished my esteem, and embittered all our intercourse. In fact, the discordancy in our taste and manners, was too great to admit of much cordial sympathy or agreeable conversation. And what little affection remained in prosperity, the chilling blast of poverty has extinguished. I would gladly exert myself for the support of my family; but the sight of their distress aggravates my torment, and almost goads me to madness."

"I must still take the liberty to expostulate," replied Glenville. "The indulgence of these feelings violates common sense, and renders your circumstances a thousand times more distressing.

Do, let me entreat you, rouse from this despondency, and make an effort to retrieve your misfortunes. Surely something may be done; and if you exert yourself with spirit, friends will not be wanting to second your endeavours. Let us walk to your apartments, and speak to Mrs. Burford on the subject. Perhaps some plan may be concerted for conciliating your friends."

"I feel obliged by your good intentions, sir," answered Burford, "but beg you will excuse visiting my apartments just now. The company of a stranger, in our present circumstances, would be exceedingly mortifying to Mrs. Burford, as well as myself. If an application recently made to some relatives in the country should succeed, or if any thing should take place to improve our prospects, we shall deem it an honour, sir, to be favoured with your company."

Finding Burford averse to any further intimacy, Glenville took his leave with much affection, after exchanging cards, and promising to write to each other, should any thing transpire worth communicating. Having returned to his apartments, he could think of nothing but this unlooked-for and melancholy interview with an old acquaintance. The unfortunate man's ghastly visage, the detail

of his reverses, his misanthropy and despair, haunted his imagination, and strengthened his self-reproaches. He saw in the fate of Barford, the legitimate consequence of his late connexions, a practical developement of the principles he had lately imbibed. And though he had not to accuse himself of any delinquences like those which had proved so disastrous to his friend, he had preferred the company, and encouraged the speculations, to which, as the primary cause, his ruin and despondency must be traced. And while he pitied the poor man's misfortunes and his hopelessness, he could not be insensible to the fearful magnitude of his crimes.

After waiting some time, and receiving no letter from Barford, he determined to visit his apartments, even at the risk of being received with coldness, or repelled as an intruder. Having at last discovered his retreat, and gained admittance, he found Mrs. Barford and her children in the most extreme indigence and distress. One small room, gloomy and ill-furnished, was the extent of their accommodations. She was clothed in a habit of plain mourning, and appeared to be absorbed in grief, and incapable of speaking. One of the children was sleeping on a couch near the window,

and the other sitting on her knee, wiping away the tears from her eyes, and in broken accents, trying to cheer his afflicted parent. But in the depth of poverty, she was beautiful. Her features were well formed, and her countenance beamed with an expression of remarkable kindness and intelligence. And though her eye was dim with weeping, and her face wrinkled and faded with sorrow, there was a moral beauty which displayed its lustre even through the tears. Her voice was soft and plaintive, and the manner in which she expressed herself, indicated a superior mind, and a spirit imbued with sentiments of religion, blended with unaffected modesty and good sense.

When Glenville had announced his name and the occasion of his visit, and inquired after the health of Mr. Burford and the family, she burst into tears, and was overcome with a paroxysm of grief. Having in some measure recovered herself, and regained sufficient self-possession to express her thoughts, she apologized for the confusion she betrayed, and put into his hands the following letter, which, she said, would explain the cause of her distress more distinctly than she could do herself.

— Coffee House, Sunday Evening.

I left you this morning, Eliza, with a fixed resolution never more to witness your distress. The last forlorn hope of bettering our condition, has now failed, and it is fruitless to attempt any thing further. You have long known my sentiments on this point, and will not be surprised at the determination I have come to. If by living longer, I could provide for your support, I should be willing to live, though it were a torment to myself. But of this I now see no possibility, and have therefore resolved to get rid of a life, long burdensome to myself and useless to you. My only regret is, that I have been the instrument of plunging you and the children into abject poverty and contempt. And it is my chief consolation in death to believe, that when I have quitted the world, the child of folly and the victim of malice and misfortune, you will receive the support of those who have hitherto withheld their assistance, and treated me with indifference and scorn. When you receive this letter, all will be over, and I shall have ceased to be. With my remains, I entreat you to bury the memory of my existence. I am not worth lamenting for; and if I were, lamenta-

tion would be unavailing. Efface my image from your thoughts, and live only for yourself and the children. For the last time, in prospect of an eternal separation in the oblivion of the grave, farewell, Eliza! farewell, my helpless babes! for ever, farewell! from

Your most unfortunate
James Burford.

By the messenger who brought this letter, on the morning after the catastrophe, Mrs. Burford was informed that the writer had gone to the house where the disastrous event took place, early the preceding afternoon. It was observed by some of the attendants, that his manner seemed exceedingly confused and mysterious, like a person agitated by misfortune; but it was not sufficiently so to excite any particular notice or suspicion. Having taken supper, and written several letters, he called for the chamber maid, and was shewn to his bed room at an early hour. When the landlord and all the family had retired, about midnight they were suddenly alarmed by the report of a pistol, and the groans of a person in the agonies of death. Having ascertained the room whence the sound proceeded, and the door which was locked

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being forced open, they found the deceased lying on the bed, drenched in blood, and all symptoms of life extinguished, with the fatal weapon grasped in his right hand, which was cold and motionless. The preceding letter was discovered on the table, sealed, with other papers belonging to the deceased, which the landlord had lost no time in forwarding according to the direction. Upon receiving this information, Mrs. Burford had hastened to the place, and seen the mangled body of her unfortunate husband. And a verdict of insanity being recorded by the inquest, nothing remained but the mournful solemnity of his interment, which, she said, was expected to take place in a day or two.

Glenville having read the letter, and learnt these particulars of the affair, expressed his sympathy and regret by a profusion of tears, while he endeavoured, like the good Samaritan, to console the widow and the orphans of his unfortunate friend. But, wishing to indulge his feelings without restraint, and thinking another interview would be less painful to Mrs. Burford, when the paroxysm of her distress had in some measure subsided, he took his leave, promising to renew his visit in a few days. At the next interview, he inquired whether she had observed any thing pe-

culiar in his manner when he left home the day preceding his discease? or whether she had previously any suspicion of his design?"

"It is a catastrophe, sir," said Mrs. Burford, "which I have long dreaded. The manner in which he often alluded to cases of suicide, convinced me he had no just sense of its moral guilt. Indeed, the principles he imbibed some years ago, and to which we owe all our misfortunes, naturally led to this consequence. I am sorry to say, sir, he had no belief in the doctrine of a divine providence, and the judgment to come; but always laughed at religion as the invention of priestcraft, or the delusion of weak minds. He considered mankind as nothing more than a superior species of brutes, subject to the same fate as all other animals; and used to speak of death as a state of annihilation, in which all consciousness of good and evil ceases for ever. When, therefore, the miseries of life exceed its happiness, and when misfortunes happen, and there is no probability of removing them, he said it was the wisest plan for people to rid themselves of such calamities at discretion. But I tremble, sir, to mention these fatal errors. All that I could say against them only provoked his ridicule and contempt, and induced him to repeat

the same shocking and pernicious opinions. When, therefore, his last application for assistance had failed, and all my efforts to cheer his spirits and rouse him to exertion, were in vain, I began to fear that something dreadful would happen to him. What, indeed, can support a person under accumulated misfortunes, or through a series of difficulties and disappointments, if he has no sense of religion, and no confidence in his own integrity? Or what can relieve the mind in such cases, like the faith and hope of a sincere christian, confiding in the wisdom of an over-ruling providence, and looking forward with a good conscience to the happiness of a better world? Had my unfortunate husband experienced this, sir, none of these calamities would have befallen us."

Glenville listened to Mrs. Burford with fixed attention. His conscience told him this was all true. It came like a dagger to his soul. He felt its application to himself. The manner in which it was spoken, as well as the sentiments, reminded him of former days, and former friendships. He could scarcely command his feelings sufficiently to prolong the conversation. He saw before him the fearful precipice to which he had so rashly approached, and was confounded at the sense of his

own danger. But wishing to ascertain further particulars, he restrained his feelings, and replied, "Certainly, madam, just sentiments of religion afford great relief in affliction to those who have no doubt of their validity. It is deeply to be regretted that Mr. Burford carried his speculations so far. Their influence on his spirit and conduct appears to have been injurious, producing a most sullen misanthropy, and preparing him for the last fatal measure. But if there was nothing in his principles to prevent this unfortunate resolution, I wonder he was not preserved from it by motives of affection, and a proper concern for the welfare of his family.

"There was a time, sir," answered Mrs. Burford, "when this might have been the case. When our union was solemnized, I believe Mr. Burford's affection was sincere, and even ardent; and for some time, I had no reason to think him indifferent to my happiness. But from his intimacy with several persons of corrupt principles and dissipated manners, I regret to say that he soon appeared to be an altered man. Other attachments alienated his affections, and he became indifferent, if not averse, to his family and home. A total change took place in his behaviour. All the kind and

tender assiduities he had previously shewn me, were discontinued. All my efforts to render his home pleasing and attractive, were fruitless. His manners became morose and misanthropical. He seldom took any notice of the children, but their innocent caresses seemed offensive to him. And though he sometimes discovered a better feeling, and appeared anxious to do something for our support, yet these better resolutions were overcome by the errors he had imbibed, and the fatal despondency resulting from them."

"I fear, then," answered Glenville, "you have derived but little happiness from the connexion, independently of your late misfortunes. I thought Mr. Burford was a man of a kind and generous disposition; and am astonished he should have neglected the most unquestionable and sacred of all claims. When I was first introduced to his acquaintance, he appeared to be a person of the most fascinating manners, qualified to win the esteem, and insure the happiness of his own circle."

"And so he was, sir," replied Mrs. Burford, bursting into tears; "at the commencement of our acquaintance, before he came to Town, his character and disposition were truly amiable. Though he made no pretensions to personal religion, I am not

aware that he was averse to it, or that he was viciously inclined; on which ground I did not hesitate to accept his addresses. But when the gay company and novel pleasures of the metropolis had corrupted his principles and changed his morals, my best friends foresaw the danger, and urged me to break off the acquaintance. But, overcome by his fascinating attentions, and consulting my affections rather than my reason, I was deaf to their advice, and resolved to continue the correspondence, at the risk of being opposed and forsaken by my nearest and most valuable friends. Having, like many young persons of my own sex, adopted the foolish maxim, that "a reformed rake makes the best husband;" and fancying my influence after marriage, would be sufficient to secure his reformation, I at last consented to solemnize our union, whatever might be the consequence. But the warnings given me, were too soon verified. From my previous views of religion, and the confidence I felt in its efficacy, I hoped to find it a source of mutual advantage; but it soon became the occasion of discord and misery."

"But I hope," said Glenville, "Mr. Burford was too liberal in his sentiments to molest your devotions, or offer the least violence to your

religious habits and predilections. As no person could inveigh against spiritual tyranny with more vehemence, he could not infringe the liberty of another, without gross inconsistency. I am aware that persons who advocate liberty abroad, are sometimes the greatest tyrants at home; and in reprobating the intolerance of religious sects, are themselves most intolerant. But I hope you found it otherwise."

"My affection for Mr. Burford," said she, "disposed me to make every allowance for the peculiarities of his temper and opinions, and I now wish them to be concealed and forgotten. But I must confess, that my attention to the duties of religion, which I could not omit without violating my own conscience, soon became a source of mutual uneasiness and dissension. In a short time after our marriage, Mr. Burford explicitly avowed his opinions on this subject, and endeavoured to convince me that the doctrines generally received among christians, are vulgar errors which have no foundation in truth, but were invented by priests and tyrants, to serve their own interest, and keep the people in ignorance and mental bondage. When his arguments failed to convince my judgment, and he saw no prospect of bringing me over

to his persuasion, he charged me with obstinacy and prejudice, and tried to overturn my belief by frequent sarcasm and ridicule. All I could say in defence of religion, only produced disgust, and led to further altercation and disunion. I saw indeed, too plainly, that my influence over him was daily losing ground; and that religion, instead of cementing our attachment, and producing reciprocal esteem, was likely to produce the most injurious consequences. For the sake of peace, therefore, I avoided the most distant allusion to the points in question, and endeavoured to remedy the evil by greater assiduities, or bear it with silent submission, hoping that something might take place in the order of providence, to rectify his errors."

"I should have thought," said Glenville, "when your husband had become unfortunate, and was obliged to relinquish his former pleasures and companions, he would have shewn some returns of kindness, and sought those satisfactions in his own family, which he could no longer look for in the world."

"When the extent of his misfortunes, sir, was first discovered to me," rejoined Mrs. Burford, "the hope of such a result very much alleviated the shock. I submitted to the reverse in our circum-

stances without repining, because I fancied the affection and harmony once subsisting between us, would be restored. Poverty and desertion, with all their attendant horrors, might have been borne with ease, could we have found greater sympathy and renewed confidence at home. But, alas! sir, I regret to say, my hopes in this respect were disappointed. Though the want of means necessarily kept Mr. Burford from his former associates and favourite resorts, my efforts to promote his happiness at home, were all abortive. Poverty, like a chilling blast, seemed to have extinguished the last spark of affection for his children, as well as for myself. And the refusal of my relatives to render us any further assistance, destroyed his last hope, and left me to anticipate the dreadful catastrophe which has just happened."

"Under these circumstances, then, madam," replied Glenville, "you have abundant reason to be reconciled to the loss. Calamitous as the event is in itself, and distressing as it must be to your feelings, especially when accompanied with penury, and without any visible means of providing for yourself and your fatherless children; yet I trust you will endeavour to bear it with composure, and, in a short time, be rescued from the privations and difficulties of your present situation."

“As it respects my own happiness personally considered,” added she, “I have too little cause to mourn. But for my unfortunate husband, the victim of despondency, torn from his family in the prime of life by his own hands, I cannot help feeling the keenest anguish. Had he been removed in the common course of nature, and had he towards the last shewn some indications of that moral change which was necessary to prepare him for another world, there would have been some infusion of hope mingled with my tears. But the circumstances and manner of his decease make me tremble. As I believe in the judgment to come, and am assured by the scriptures that no murderer can inherit eternal life, I cannot but shudder at the idea of his final condemnation and inevitable despair. Had he fallen under the wild impulse of insanity, a faint hope might have sprung from the gloom which surrounds his fate. But having committed the fatal deed with the maturest deliberation, in the cool exercise of his reasoning faculties, the hope of mercy being extended to him is impossible. When I therefore think of the anguish of his lost spirit, the unavailing remorse which must follow him for ever, in the remembrance of talents misapplied, means of happiness abused,

religion trampled upon, and life extinguished ; my heart sinks within me, and I am harassed day and night with the picture of his distress, which, like a spectre, haunts my imagination wherever I go, and unfits me for every engagement."

"But, my dear madam," said Glenville, "these paroxysms of grief will avail nothing. Your own principles, as a christian, as well as the interests of your children, now looking to you with a double claim, require you to be composed. By indulging these emotions to excess, you will endanger your health, and render the children's prospects infinitely more gloomy and appalling. Your temporal affairs demand immediate attention, and if there be any thing in which my assistance or advice can be of the least service, I shall be most happy to give it at any time."

"Your sympathy, sir, quite overpowers me," answered Mrs. Burford, "and I am unable to express the sense I entertain of your disinterested kindness. As to my prospects, they are discouraging in the extreme, and I am utterly at a loss what steps to take, or to what source I can look for adequate relief. My own relations have been so much wearied by former applications, that I feel exceedingly averse to ask their assistance again."

I think I could soon procure a tolerable competency for myself and children, by conducting a small establishment for the tuition of young ladies, had I the means of quitting these wretched apartments, and hiring a neat cottage in the vicinity of town. But at present, I see not how this can be accomplished. However, I will not despair. It is consolatory to know, that the bounds of our habitation are fixed, and the hairs of our head all numbered. And though the ways of providence appear mysterious, it has been often found that light springs up in the darkest hour, and relief comes in when difficulties seem most insurmountable."

After further expressing his sympathy, and promising to call again in a few days, Glenville took his leave of the unfortunate family with many tears. As he withdrew from the scene of poverty and distress, and reflected on Burford's guilty career and miserable fate, it revived the recollection of his own history, and portrayed in imagination a fearful picture of his recent errors. He now saw the character of his late associates, and the moral tendency of atheism, in their proper light, and perceived more forcibly than before the justice of his father's reasoning on the subject. He was likewise compelled to acquiesce in the arguments

urged by Mr. Randolph on the importance of unanimity in religion; and felt disposed to applaud ~~the~~ decided piety and firmness of principle displayed by Lavinia in the resolution she had formed. If, thought he, religion be true, its infinite importance must forbid an alliance with its enemies. The aversion of a confirmed sceptic to the form and substance of religion, must preclude a cordial union with persons living under its influence. The difference between them is immense; and a permanent coalition of feelings and interests so dissimilar and incongruous, is both morally absurd, and physically impracticable.

In the mean time, Glenville waited upon Mr. Burford, who agreed to make a liberal provision for the widow and orphans of his unfortunate nephew. He likewise wrote to Mrs. Burford's relations, who were not backward to render all the assistance in their power. An interview and reconciliation took place between the parties, and the funeral expences and other demands on the widow being discharged, she left town to reside in the immediate neighbourhood of her friends, and to devote her time and talents to the care and education of her children. In a few weeks afterwards she wrote Glenville the following letter.

June 29.

Sir,

I should think myself chargeable with extreme ingratitude, were I to suffer another week to pass away, without writing to acknowledge the very great obligations I owe to your benevolence. When from motives of compassion you first called to inquire after Mr. Burford, you found me involved in the deepest poverty and distress, with my poor babes, bereft of their father by a dreadful stroke, looking up to their widowed mother in vain for support. But you, sir, came as angel of God, to relieve me in the day of my calamity, when, like Hagar and her son in the desert, we were perishing for want. By your generous and powerful interest on my behalf, when my condition appeared most hopeless, the privations I had long laboured under were removed, and the means of future competency provided. I can never forget your kindness. The grateful remembrance of it will ever be uppermost in my thoughts. As my children rise to years of understanding, I will teach them to pronounce your name with gratitude and affection. Already has the blessing of those who were ready to perish come upon you, and you have caused the heart of the widow and the fatherless to rejoice.

But in offering to you, sir, these expressions of undissembled gratitude, I would acknowledge and adore the divine goodness as the originating source of all. The dark and dismal scenes which so recently surrounded me, have only served to confirm my attachment to the word of God, and to give me a more lively sense of its consolations and necessity. I know not, sir, how I could have borne my afflictions for some years past, and especially the fatal catastrophe which made myself a widow and my children orphans, had it not been for the truths and promises of the holy scriptures. When I think of the opinions of my unfortunate husband, and his repeated efforts to shake my belief as a christian, I cannot be too thankful for those instructions in early life, which in some measure fortified me against the danger, and showed me the value of religion when it was most needful. And now, since the gospel has consoled me in affliction, I trust it will be my guide in circumstances of health and comfort, that I may live for the welfare of my children and the glory of God, recommending its truths to others by my own experience and example.

Permit me then, sir, to express my earnest wish that you may enjoy the highest happiness religion

can afford. Notwithstanding your acquaintance with Mr. Burford and others of the same persuasion, I feel assured that you will ever disclaim and oppose their pernicious errors. And though I presume not to dictate, I cannot but regard your sympathy and benevolent attentions as the evidence and effect of genuine piety, and the sure pledge of your future eminence and felicity in the christian life.

Begging you will accept the sincere thanks of a grateful heart, and permit the widow and the fatherless to pray for your prosperity, I subscribe myself, honoured sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

E. Burford,

END OF VOL. I.





THE
ANTIDOTE;
OR,
MEMOIRS
OF
A MODERN FREETHINKER:
INCLUDING
LETTERS AND CONVERSATIONS
ON
SCEPTICISM,
AND
THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.
IN TWO VOLUMES.

"Feliciter is sapit, qui periculo alieno sapit."—*Plaut.*

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1827.

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Mullinger, Printer, Bishops Stortford.

THE ANTIDOTE;
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A MODERN FREETHINKER.

CHAP. X.

WHILE Glenville was one morning brooding in silent melancholy over recent events, a letter was brought to his apartments by a special messenger, to which an immediate answer was requested. He opened the seal with great eagerness, and read the following mysterious communication from a gentleman with whom he had lately become acquainted.

My dear Sir,

I hasten to apprise you of an alarming catastrophe which has just befallen our friend Mortimer. We are all overwhelmed with distress at what has happened, and are under the most appalling apprehensions for his safety. He is

anxious to see you without delay. Call at Dover Street as soon as possible, and I will acquaint you with the particulars of this unfortunate business.

I have the honour to be, dear sir,

Your most obedient servant,

May 29th.

C. Euston.

With feelings powerfully excited by this letter, Glenville lost no time in proceeding to Mr. Euston's. He found the whole family exceedingly distressed, and with difficulty ascertained the particulars of this alarming occurrence. After some hesitation, interrupted by the acuteness of his feelings, Mr. Euston informed him, that one of the party invited to dinner the last evening, had introduced to their acquaintance a young naval captain of boisterous manners, who endeavoured to rival Mortimer in his attentions to Miss Euston, whose confidence he had lately courted, and obtained. Knowing that the captain had been apprized of their acquaintance, Mortimer considered his behaviour on the occasion, as a marked insult, a studied indignity, which no man of honour could endure. In the violence of resentment and jealousy, therefore, returning to his apartments, he sent the captain a challenge, and fixed the time

and place of meeting with their seconds the next morning. This satisfaction he had a right to demand, for so unprovoked and deliberate an insult.

The brave captain was enraged at the idea of being challenged to a single combat by a young gentleman who had hitherto been accustomed only to verbal weapons. He moreover wisely believed that the honour of the British navy would be tarnished by refusing to meet his antagonist. He therefore engaged a second, and at the time proposed, hastened to the scene of action, resolving, like a man of honour, to meet and decide the challenge. Both declined every idea of a friendly compromise. The space was marked out in due form by the seconds, and in a few minutes Mortimer fell, the victim of temerity and revenge.

A surgeon in attendance examined the wound, and perceived it to be a case of extreme danger. And though willing to cherish hope, the sweetest cordial in affliction, he expressed to his friends some alarm for the consequence, which their own fears naturally magnified. Having conveyed him to suitable apartments near the spot, the most prompt and skilful assistance was employed for his recovery, though but slender hopes were entertained of its success.

The report of this catastrophe had reached Mr. Euston's family in a form the most calculated to surprise and overwhelm them. Miss Euston at once lost her self-possession, and fell into violent hysterics, which no efforts of friendship could allay. When the paroxysm subsided, she sat like a statue, motionless and sad. A sullen gloom overspread her countenance, and her broken expressions indicated the wildness and incoherence of her thoughts. And though a tear sometimes started from her eye, and a transient smile played upon her features as she looked wistfully around, these indications of returning reason were soon followed by symptoms of a more painful nature, which time alone could remove.

Nothing could exceed the anguish depicted in every countenance, and felt by the whole family. With feelings of the tenderest sympathy, Glenville did all in his power, and said every thing he could think of, to mitigate their distress, and afford some hope under this calamity. "Alas! my friend," cried Mr. Euston, "what can be said to alleviate this sudden, this melancholy disaster! To have lost a friend, whose connexions with the family afforded mutual satisfaction, would have been a trial sufficiently severe. But to be deprived of

him by the savage custom of duelling, and to have been ourselves the innocent occasion of his fate, renders the calamity too severe to be borne. What then must we feel, Mr. Glenville, when we observe its tragical effect on the distressed object before you, and the still more fatal consequences likely to ensue? Alas! my friend, who could have thought that the pleasure we enjoyed last evening, would be succeeded by this melancholy reverse, and produce an event which threatens to embitter; if not destroy, our future happiness!"

"It is indeed most distressing," replied he, "and I don't wonder at the keenness of your feelings. How precarious is the title by which we retain every thing most dear! How suddenly do disappointments and reverses overtake us in our happiest hours! The brightest hopes and fairest enjoyments give but a transient lustre, which, in some cases, serves only to heighten the succeeding gloom. But, sir, we must not despair. Our fears are often greater than our calamities. In the worst state of things, there is room for hope: And I still flatter myself that this event, unfortunate as it is, will prove less disastrous than you imagine. Let us hope that our friend Mortimer will survive his wound, and by proper attention facilitate Miss Euston's recovery."

Glenville having expressed these sentiments, hastened to the apartments of his friend, who received him with peculiar affection, and commenced the conversation with his usual cheerfulness and energy.

"I am glad you are come, Glenville," said he. "I have been anxiously expecting you every moment for the last hour. I was just going to send a special messenger to inform you of my misfortune, and to request your attendance immediately. But I depended on Mr. Euston to write to you, and was sure you would not wait for entreaty, but embrace the first opportunity to visit a friend in distress."

"My dear Mortimer," replied Glenville, "you may be sure of my tenderest sympathy. I only lament the necessity of it. The moment I received Mr. Euston's letter, I hastened to ascertain the particulars of the case, and have lost no time in coming to see you. Alas! my friend, how much it grieves me to find you in this condition. Is there any thing I can do for you? Do tell me how you feel, and let me know the worst symptoms. I trust the wound is not dangerous!"

"I hope not," answered Mortimer, "though I have many fears. The ball penetrated my side, and is supposed to be lodged in the interior. I feel

but little pain at present, and, as you perceive, am free from inflammation. I feel much exhausted with the loss of blood and the surgical operations. But, if my mind were as easy as my body, I could await the consequences with composure."

"The disaster," rejoined Glenville, "has quite overcome me, and I am still unable to account for it. How could you be so rash and infatuated as to challenge a person of the captain's profession and temperament? You might be certain of the consequence. Trained by his profession to the use of arms, and accustomed to set little value on human life, how could he hesitate to punish your temerity, or what chance could you hope for in the conflict? Besides, I thought you had more philosophy than to sanction the savage custom of duelling. There were other ways of vindicating your honour, and repelling the captain's rudeness and insolence. But the honour which depends on the issue of a duel, is not worth having, Mortimer. At all events, if this barbarous custom is to be maintained, let it be confined to those who have learnt the art of killing without murder, and are well paid for the hazard. Let others prove that wise men will try every thing by words rather than

arms, the weapons of violence and insanity... Because my warmth, Mortimer; but I must protest against this abominable practice, and condemn my friend for so hazarding his life."

"My dear Glenville," replied he, "do not distress me with your reproaches. A voice from within has already told me the same things; and I have enough to do to silence its clamour, without being upbraided by a friend. How can you increase my torment by this severity! It is the duty of a friend to soothe, and not to harass; to heal the mind, and not to wound it. I am wounded already, and hoped you were coming to bind me up. I admit the justice of your censure, but complain of its ill-timed cruelty. O Glenville! what shall I do, or where can I look for the voice of sympathy and the words of peace, when my own heart condemns, and my warmest friend accuses me! O friendship! friendship! vain and delightful sun-beam! vision of the morning! fugitive deceiver of the mind! delusive smile of the gay and healthful! sporting like the butterfly amidst the bloom and sweetness and brilliance of life! Thou abhorrest the sick man's chamber! Thou turnest away, like a Levite, from the fallen victim of malice! I see thee fleeing from my distress.

O Glenville, call me not friend, and I may then bear thy reproaches?"

"O Mortimer," exclaimed Glenville, bursting into tears; "how can you indulge in such rhapsodies, or question the sincerity of my friendship? My affection and sympathy are not the less ardent because I told you the truth, and condemned the cause of your misfortune. Yes, I must still persist in calling myself your friend, and will do nothing to forfeit that title. But let us drop the subject. You will injure yourself by this exertion: I must, therefore, blame myself for raising the discussion in your present weak state. After so much exhaustion, you stand in need of silence and repose. I will now bid you adieu till the evening, and hope a few hours rest will tranquillize your spirits, and favour your recovery.

Glenville returned to his apartments very much depressed, and went through the engagements of the day with extreme difficulty. Every thing he attempted, became confused and laborious. His thoughts wandered from the point, and his imagination was bewildered. His own perplexities and his friend's misfortune were continually before him. His transient interview with Mortimer had only served to aggravate his distress; while the

mysteriousness of his friend's expressions, and the wildness and incoherence of his manner, heightened the concern he felt for his misfortune. Yielding, therefore, to the intensity of his feelings, he despatched the engagements of the day as speedily as possible, and hastened to spend the evening with his friend.

In the mean time, Mortimer had received a visit from his father, who, with great tenderness and honesty, urged him to reflect on the guilty cause of his catastrophe, and prepare for the solemn change that awaited him. Indeed, his own conscience had told him that before. The moment he had fallen, and begun to think of the probable result, he was fully convinced that nothing could justify or palliate his conduct. This conviction brought to his remembrance the pious counsels he had received in youth, and the course of folly and atheism into which he had since fallen. The agitation of his feelings was the natural consequence, though to his friend Glenville, it appeared strange and unaccountable.

In the evening Glenville found the symptoms of his case much the same, with a slight increase of fever. Mortimer was glad to see him sooner than he expected, and, in answer to his inquiries, said,

he felt but little pain, and could have slept soundly, if his secret tormenter had not prevented. But solitude filled him with horror. He could not bear to be left alone, and hoped his friend would spend the night with him.

"I am come for that purpose, my dear Mortimer," answered Glenville, "and shall be happy to do any thing for your comfort. You must not let this unfortunate affair prey too much upon your spirits. Cheerfulness is more necessary for you than medicine, and would facilitate your recovery. You were not used to be overcome by trifles, and I hope your philosophy will not fail you now."

"O Glenville," replied he, "if you knew what I feel, you would not talk in this manner! It is of no use to tell me what I used to be, or to remind me of my philosophy. Ever since you left me in the morning, I have been striving in vain to calm the perturbation of my feelings, and to recover my usual cheerfulness. But a silent enemy within torments me with his deaf scourge, and makes me astonished at his grim aspect. Oh, that I could rid myself of his presence, and regain the composure I have lost!"

"My dear friend," rejoined Glenville, "what do you mean by this language? Some of your ex-

pressions in the morning quite confounded me, and now you are using the same strain. If I had heard you speak of the voice within, or the silent tormentary, at the commencement of our acquaintance, I should not have wondered. But what have we to do with the authority of conscience, the offspring of credulity and superstition, or the invention of priests to support their influence? This point, you know, was decided at one of our late meetings. And you are not surely going to be superstitious because this disaster has befallen you?"

"Alas, Glenville," said he, "I used to think and talk in this manner, but now I feel it to be all false! A sense of right and wrong is not the offspring of superstition, but of nature. It arises from the essential and immutable distinction of good and evil, and is the legitimate result of sound reason. Within the last few hours, this conviction has come upon me with irresistible evidence; and I could as soon disbelieve my existence or identity, as deny its truth. Oh, that I had always felt so, and been governed by its influence! I should then have found what I now most need, the approving testimony of my own conscience. But now the past grieves, and the future terrifies me. Memory

affords me no pleasure. My whole life has been spent in vanity and mischief. Not a year, nor a month, nor a day scarcely, deserves remembrance. My course has been strewed with the wreck of virtue and the ravages of crime. How many have been injured by my conduct! And yet what atonement can I offer to expiate my guilt! It is all over, and in a few days, perhaps, I shall realize the worst. O cursed pride! cursed passions! to what misery have ye forced me! Alas! my friend, how can I be calm?"

"My dear Mortimer," interrupted Glenville, "do not distress yourself by these extravagant reproaches. I deplore your condition, and sympathize in your sufferings. It is natural to recoil from the approach of death, as the extinction of present happiness. Our feelings cling to life, even when life becomes little better than a curse. How much more must it be the case with a young man like yourself, in the bloom of health, and with the fairest prospects of honour and happiness! But if the philosophy we have recently supported be true, death is rather a circumstance of regret than of fear. It is the loss of what we have, and the extinction of what we are; and not the dread of any thing hereafter. If the soul be nothing more than

a physical organization, it will of course terminate in death, and its pains end with its enjoyments. The moment death comes, all will be over. It is, therefore, idle for you to think about the terrors of a future existence, although it has been sanctioned by the superstition of ages. This, you know, Charles, is our philosophy."

"Call it not philosophy any more," replied Mortimer. "It is not philosophy but delusion. I fear we have been deceiving ourselves. Indeed, I feel an irresistible conviction of it; and the thought overwhelms me."

"Your language quite confounds me too," answered Glenville. "I am utterly at a loss to understand you. Surely you have not forgotten your own arguments, against the common hypothesis of the immortality of the soul, so admirably delivered at one of our late meetings, which all the company deemed conclusive and unanswerable."

"No, no, Glenville, I have not forgotten them," said he. "But they now appear futile and fallacious, and weigh not a scruple in comparison with the evidence which supports the doctrine. I feel the arguments you refer to, slipping from under me like a bed of sand. My own mind, so long

abused, has now asserted its prerogative; and though I can scarcely tell you what I feel, I could as soon deny the reality of my sensible perceptions, as deny the interior operations and distinct subsistence of the soul."

"Your mode of talking, Mortimer, is still mysterious," rejoined he. "I have no wish to invalidate your convictions, or question the testimony of one's own consciousness. But I wish you would try to explain yourself."

"I feel then," said his friend, "a deep and invincible persuasion, that, should I now die, there is a principle within me, that will survive the stroke. The nearer I approach to death, the more sensible I become of its distinct and immortal nature. I feel at this moment those indelible emotions which prove the existence of an immaterial and immortal spirit within me; and all the books with which materialists have pestered the world, shall not convince me to the contrary. I used to laugh at this sentiment of Sterne's, as a voluntary delusion; but I now feel it to be incontestibly true. To die, therefore, is not the extinction of being, but a change of state, in which the consciousness of this life, with all its crimes, will follow us for ever. O fearful prospect! I

shrink from the picture my imagination has drawn. How can I enter that world? how can I endure the last scrutiny! What can I look for but infamy and despair!

"But," interrupted Glenville, "why should you indulge these terrors? Even supposing you should live again, why must you expect a life of torment and despair? You believe in the infinite goodness of the Deity, do you not?"

"Certainly," answered Mortimer; "that is my belief. Every thing in nature proves it: an infinite being must be infinitely good. There could be no happiness, if the Deity were not good; and no hope of its continuance, if his goodness were not infinite."

"Very true, my friend," said Glenville. "The sentiment is admirable and cheering. Why then should you, in defiance of this principle, become the victim of despair? Do you fancy the Deity can take delight in the eternal misery of his creatures? No, no, that is impossible! the supposition is blasphemous. Why then despair?"

"Let me ask you, my friend," answered Mortimer, "does not misery exist in the world, as well as happiness? And is not vice, in many cases, followed by inward remorse, and a train of over-

whelming calamities? Yet you maintain, that God, who permits, nay even inflicts, these sufferings, is infinitely good. You must therefore admit, that the acutest anguish suffered by mankind is in some way consistent with the divine goodness. If it be so in this world, why not in the next? And if the penal effects of sin may follow a man for fifty or sixty years, and then descend in the form of poverty and disgrace to his offspring; why not follow him through eternity?

"I scarcely know what to say to it," replied Glenville. "It is a case of great difficulty. The nature and government of God, it must be confessed, are involved in impenetrable mystery. And though the first principles of natural religion are very clear, yet there are many things in the system of nature not to be accounted for."

"Certainly there are," rejoined Mortimer. "But our notions of the Deity are too partial. Because the idea of infinite goodness is pleasing, we make it our only theme, and overlook other properties of the divine nature equally essential to an infinite being. The goodness of God is the goodness of a parent, a sovereign, a judge. It is blended with order and justice, and its benefits are conditionally dispensed. The Deity governs us as

free and accountable agents, whose happiness and misery depend in a certain degree upon ourselves. He may, therefore, chastise and punish our offences, without any impeachment of his goodness, even though it should require the punishments of eternity."

"I scarcely knew how to answer your arguments, Charles," said Glenville. "But admitting this to be the case, you cannot suppose the Deity will punish involuntary errors; or that you have any reason to be alarmed on account of your late opinions, supposing them to be wrong. A man's opinions, you know, are not in his own power. The judgment must yield to the weight of evidence. And if we have had our doubts as to the commonly received doctrines, how could we help the objections and difficulties that raised them? Surely, the innocence of mental error must be admitted upon any principle!

"If," replied he, "my errors had been merely mental and involuntary, I should have sought a refuge in this sentiment. No man will be condemned for an impossibility. If God give not the means of faith, unbelief cannot be criminal. But conscience tells me, this has not been my case. However it may be with you, Glenville, I now

feel that mine have been voluntary errors, errors of the heart and the conduct. I have not merely mistaken the truth, but opposed and reviled it. I have acted against light and knowledge, against the instructions of my youth, and the kindest efforts of parental piety and tenderness. So that if others can derive some solace from the supposed innocence of error, I am expelled for ever from that refuge."

"Well, be it so," answered Glenville, considerably affected; "yet I don't see why your case should seem desperate. You have still the divine mercy to rest upon, which assures forgiveness to the penitent. If parents forgive the misconduct of their children, when marks of repentance are discovered, it would be impious and unnatural to suppose God were unwilling to forgive us, if we see our errors and repent."

"That doctrine is doubtless true; as a general sentiment," replied Montimer; "but there are many cases in which it affords the sinner little or no hope. We know by experience, that repentance, however sincere, does not, in every instance, prevent the consequences of sin; or restore profigates to the health and happiness they have lost. Mine, for example, is a case in point. I deeply

repent of my late rashness and impetuosity. But the wound still remains, and will probably prove fatal, notwithstanding my repentance. Why, then, may we not fear the same principle of justice will be acted upon in the world to come? The doctrine of divine mercy, therefore, affords me no hope."

"I admit the fact," said Glenville, "but deny the propriety of your inference. Must we not believe that the penal consequences of sin, which are often felt notwithstanding repentance, are designed by the divine economy to answer a good effect, and to become indications or instruments of mercy? You must not reason from a remedial punishment in time, to a vindictive one in eternity."

"If the effects of sin were indeed always remedial," rejoined Mortimer, "your argument would be conclusive. But how many criminals suffer the penalties of the law, and make their exit on the scaffold, without evincing the least proof of its salutary influence. I believe that God is merciful, and ready to forgive. But I have rejected the only system that gives us this assurance, and the only terms on which forgiveness can be obtained."

"I do not see the force of this difficulty, my dear friend," answered he, "and would still urge you to repose on the divine mercy. If you believe that God pardons the penitent, and has given to mankind the promises of pardon, whether your belief be founded on the gospel or not, why hesitate to take the benefit of such indemnity?"

"To pardon delinquents," replied Mortimer, "is the prerogative of a sovereign; an exercise of power, in which a prince of great clemency will take pleasure, when it can be exercised consistently with the justice and order of his government. But no criminal condemned to die, can be certain that pardon will be granted, or on what terms, till it be made known by the proper authority. How then can we know that the supreme sovereign will pardon our delinquencies, or on what condition pardon may be expected, unless we receive the new testament as a discovery of his will? But in the new testament, if I rightly remember, forgiveness is promised only to those who repent and believe the gospel. I am, therefore, excluded on this ground. I have denied and opposed the gospel myself, and persuaded others to deny it. I have sacrificed the principles taught me in youth, and persuaded others to make the same sacrifice. I

have pursued a course of impiety and sin, and been the instrument of drawing others into the same vices. I am not only unprepared for a speedy removal to another world, but have occasioned this catastrophe by my own violence. I am going to the judgment-seat, covered with guilt. I shall be condemned, not as a common sinner, a common unbeliever only, but must take my place amongst the foremost ranks of criminals, with nothing to extenuate my guilt, but every thing to aggravate its blackness, and to increase the severity of my doom. I must fall self-convicted, as an infidel, a suicide, and a murderer !”

“O, my friend,” said Glenville, “cease to load yourself with these horrible reproaches. I cannot suffer you any longer to talk in this strain. You are doing yourself great injustice, and charging yourself with crimes which are abhorrent to your nature. I admit you have brought this calamity upon yourself, and are therefore blamable ; though I trust it will not prove fatal. But how can you call yourself a murderer, when the kindness of your disposition is perfectly notorious ? All will give you credit for benevolence and humanity. You may at least console yourself, that you have been no one’s enemy but your own.”

"In one respect, that may be the case," answered Mortimer. "Excepting the occasional paroxysms of passion, my natural disposition certainly more inclined me to benefit others, than to injure them by acts of personal violence. But I have injured them in away more serious and lasting. I have destroyed the happiness of my own family, and pierced daggers to the heart of a parent, whom every feeling of duty and gratitude required me to honour. I have seduced my companions from the influence of religion, or confirmed them in infidelity and crime. If they persist in the same course, and perish at the day of judgment, I must be condemned as the author of their destruction. The sight of their torments will increase my own, and the guilt and anguish of a murderer will follow me for ever."

"I admit," replied Glenville, "that an injury done to the mind may be more criminal than personal violence. And if the soul be immortal, its immortal injury must be the greatest ruin. But your language is too strong. Your feelings of self-reproach mislead your judgment."

"I wish it were so, Glenville," said he. "But I fear the most coloured picture I could draw, must fall infinitely short of the reality. Did you

ever notice that remarkable sentiment of the learned Doddridge? 'The eternal salvation of one soul is of greater importance, and big with greater events, than the temporal salvation of a whole kingdom, though it were to last for ten thousand ages: because there will come up a point, an instant in eternity, when that one soul will have existed longer than all the individuals of a whole kingdom in close succession will have existed in the space of ten thousand ages: therefore, one soul is capable of a larger share of happiness or misery through an endless eternity, for that will be still before it, than a whole kingdom is capable of in ten thousand ages.'"

"It is a striking sentiment," rejoined Glenville, "and I remember being much struck with it some years ago. If the christian doctrine be true, I don't see how the conclusiveness of his argument can be questioned. But what has this to do with your case?"

"What has it to do with my case, did you say, Glenville?" responded Mortimer. "Why it shews the immensity of my guilt. For the eternal destruction of one soul is a greater evil, and involves a greater mass of suffering, than the temporal death of thousands and tens of thousands,

though cut off by a general massacre. And yet how many have I drawn to the very verge of this destruction! Tell me not of the guilt of Marius or Sylla, Timur or Alaric, or other military assassins, who passed through life amidst the groans and blood and horrors of the slaughtered! Mine is immeasurable! It admits of no expiation, no remedy! nothing, nothing but remorse!"

"But where, my friend, are your accusers?" said Glenville. "Who has filed an indictment against you? If others are silent, why pronounce the verdict yourself?"

"Because," said he, "my conscience impels me. The trial has passed in the court within, and I am found guilty. You yourself, my friend, are a decisive witness against me; and I have much to answer for on your account. When I first had the pleasure of your acquaintance, your faith, your piety, your happiness, were conspicuous to all. But now, alas! they are gone. The poison of infidelity has destroyed them. But who infused that poison but myself? and who besides can you accuse of the moral ruin? O Glenville, could I eradicate the deleterious principle from your bosom, it would at the same time draw one dagger from my own, and enable me to meet death with less

reluctance. If I perished only as a suicide, it would be tolerable."

"My dear Mortimer," exclaimed his friend, "cease to distress yourself on that score. If I have gone wrong, the blame devolves on myself only. I am open to conviction, and willing to pay that attention to the gospel which it demands. But let me entreat you to be composed. This painful exertion will do you more injury than you imagine. Let us drop the subject till to morrow. A little sleep will tranquillize your spirits, and we may then talk the matter over more calmly."

"Sleep!" said he, "how can I sleep on a bed of thorns? I am like a mariner in the shrouds, tossed by the tempest! I lie on the brink of a fearful precipice, and the wide gulf is opening to receive me! How can I be calm?"

Glenville was too much affected by the anguish of his friend, to prolong the conversation. He had endeavoured for the last hour to suppress his own feelings, with a view to console his friend. But unable to conceal them any longer, he left the room, and sought a place of retirement, where he might indulge his sensibilities and tears, and allow the current of emotion to flow unrestrained. His resolution was overwhelmed by this affecting inter-

view. All his scepticism and unbelief seemed to vanish. The spirit of prayer revived after long neglect. He fell prostrate to the earth, and relieved the fulness of his heart by an unreserved utterance of his feelings. If he ever felt the sentiments of a true penitent; if he ever offered the prayer of a sincere though bewildered mind; if he ever presented to the divine throne an intercession for his friend, in the language of tenderness and importunity and faith; then was the hour, the solemn and affecting hour, of their indulgence.

On returning to the room, Glenville found his friend in a gentle doze. Soon afterwards his sleep became restless and broken, and he betrayed all the symptoms of an approaching delirium. His features were convulsed, and he seemed to be the victim of distressing dreams. His countenance sometimes expressed a mixture of violence and horror, and he appeared to be engaged in a conflict with demons, whom he was anxious to repel. His language, at intervals, indicated too plainly the nature of his feelings, and the disorder of his brain. Sometimes a calm ensued, and a smile of conscious victory played upon his countenance. Then again, he expressed all the horrors of a renewed conflict, from which it was impossible to escape. Sometimes he spoke in broken and half-formed sen-

tences, as though he suffered death, and was consigned to the infernal regions; and then again, he indulged in the following kind of soliloquy.

“Wretch that I am! whither shall I flee, or where can I find a refuge? Shall I return to the pleasures of society? These are the instruments of my ruin! Shall I retire into solitude? There my inexorable tormenter will follow me! Shall I go to the sanctuary of religion? But I have exiled myself from its comforts! Shall I entreat the sympathy of my friends? But the assistance of friendship is in vain! Shall I supplicate the mercy of my God? No; my unbelief forbids the possibility of pardon! Ah! whither shall I flee for safety? Oh that I had perished in the fight! Ye rocks, fall and hide me! Ye waves of the ocean, rise and cover me! Let me plunge into the stream and die!—One minute’s pause, and I will go! Yet a little longer; the tide is fast rising, and will soon be full! Ah! what do I see coming on the main! Hark! I hear them calling me. Oh, how repulsive their appearance! Are they demons or men? Oh, ye cursed demons, draw me not away! I see the deep before me! Ah! ye are deaf to my entreaties! I am going—I sink—I perish—I am lost!”

In a few hours these delirious symptoms sub-

sided, and he became more calm. His sleep was more natural and easy, and his attendants hoped the morning would find him in a reviving state. With this hope, Glenville withdrew at an early hour, and returned to his own apartments, where silence and repose in some measure relieved his anxiety and fatigue.

Next evening he found Mortimer considerably revived. His delirium had in a great measure subsided, and the symptoms of his case were deemed by the faculty more favourable. But his mind continued equally depressed, and he felt all the contrition and remorse of a sincere penitent. He still reproached himself with equal severity, and lamented with undiminished bitterness the pernicious effects of his late conduct. A deep and effectual change had evidently taken place in the habits of his mind, and the texture of his feelings. His views, his taste, his disposition, and his pleasures, all appeared to be reversed. The courses of infidelity and dissipation which he had lately pursued with so much avidity, were now become offensive to his thoughts. The claims of religion and virtue, and the retired excellence of good men, which he had looked upon with scorn, were now invested with fresh interest and beauty.

He was anxious to converse about the gospel, and to feel its influence, though its discoveries gave him little or no relief. He was unable to apply its principles to himself, but still deemed his condition hopeless.

Mortimer appeared particularly anxious that his friend Howard should relinquish the connexions he had formed, and examine afresh the ground of his late scepticism. During their next interview, therefore, while Glenville was endeavouring to remove his distress, he turned the question to himself, and urged him to consider the subject of their late speculations with greater seriousness and candour.

"I wish," said he, "I could obtain the happiness you recommend. But let me ask you, my friend, candidly, are you happy in your own mind? Are you quite satisfied with the views I unhappily induced you to embrace? Do you never feel any doubts or misgivings as to their stability? Has the rejection of christian habits and principles at all contributed to your happiness? Can you look back upon yourself during the last few months with the approving testimony of your own conscience? Do you not feel a secret and painful intimation that you are wrong, and that unbelief, in all its speculations, is a dark and dangerous course?"

"Alas! my dear friend," answered Glenville, to tell you the truth, I must confess that my mind is far from being at ease. On these points I have lately felt the most painful and embarrassing suspicions. But the difficulties which surround christianity, according to our late way of thinking, seem so numerous and formidable, that I scarcely know how to receive it. And yet, I am still harassed with a suspicion, that these difficulties are far less than we imagine, and when compared with its evidences, are of no force at all. And certainly, as to moral proficiency and inward repose, my course has of late been wholly retrograde and self-mortifying. I am open to conviction; but the more I think, the more I feel myself bewildered."

"I can fully appreciate your feelings," replied, Mortimer, "and have often struggled with the same difficulties. But pride and self-consequence opposed concession, and suppressed the first inclination to be informed, or to assume again the station of a learner. It is, indeed, humbling to one's vanity, mortifying to the assumption of superior discernment, to admit, or even to feel, that we have been mistaken. But this calamity has subdued the pride of intellect, and disposed me, however mortifying it may seem, to acknow-

ledge that 'I have erred from the truth, and pierced myself through with many sorrows.' I now see the folly of assuming the infallibility of reason, or attempting proudly to withstand the omnipotence of truth."

"In these sentiments I cordially agree," said Glenville. "Though I admire a becoming firmness, I think the obstinacy of prejudice is contemptible. There is no dignity in persisting in opinions merely because we have once thought them to be true, or even recommended them to the public by fallacious reasoning. It is more rational and dignified to be convinced of an error, to renounce it upon conviction, and to embrace the true doctrine. If we make any pretence to reason, our sole object should be to discover and receive the truth, whatever may be its name, or whoever may be its votaries. Truth, pure and unmixed truth alone, is the object of rational free-thinking. On this ground I received and avowed certain deistical opinions, in common with yourself and other members of the club. But if further inquiry should prove them to be wrong, I should not hesitate to disown them. It may be humbling to recant; but wisdom, and truth, and integrity require it; though it should certainly excite to

greater caution and patience in our future inquiries."

"I am glad you think so, my esteemed friend," answered Mortimer. "The great difficulty is now removed, and with such sentiments I think you cannot ultimately miss the truth, or be very long in discovering it. When I last called at your apartments, your mind seemed more than usually perplexed, and I have much wished to resume the subject we then conversed about. I fear our late proceedings have greatly distressed some of your friends, and deprived you of their confidence. As to my foolish advice on that occasion, I have no doubt your good sense led you to act differently. To be assured of your happiness would essentially relieve the gloom that still encircles me."

"Don't distress yourself on any account by any means," replied Glenville. "Past transactions cannot be reversed. Though we regret their folly, we must endure their consequences. But the agitation you refer to, was in part occasioned by some letters from my father, Mr. Ward, and other friends, in reply to the one which stated my objections to the christian doctrine. Their reasonings had awakened doubts respecting our late opinions of which I was before unconscious. And

I must confess myself still dissatisfied and uneasy. At all events, I was too hasty in the avowal of my scepticism. In a matter of so much importance, the utmost caution is required. Perhaps you would not dislike to hear their letters, and give me your opinion respecting them."

"By no means," said Mortimer. "You will rather do me a great favour to read them. I know your father is a man of superior understanding, and have no doubt his letters are excellent and instructive."

Glenville then took the letters from his pocket-book, and in the course of the evening read them to his friend. Mortimer listened to their contents with great attention, and frequently expressed his approbation in strong terms. "The severest things your father has written concerning modern infidelity and its abettors," said he, "is fully justified by my own case. Conscience compels me to own this of myself, and I know it to be the case with many others. And surely the train of facts and evidences adduced in Mr. Ward's letters, could never be adduced in favour of an imposture. No other system which pretends to a divine origin, Mahomedanism for example, can possibly admit these or similar arguments in its favour. I am

more than ever convinced that deism is untenable, and that we have no resting place for our hopes but in the gospel of Christ. Alas! my friend, how grievously have I injured you!"

"I feel the force of these arguments," added Glenville, "and am willing to review the steps I have taken. If my own precipitancy, and the delusiveness of error, have misled me, it is my earnest wish to be set right. But I must proceed more cautiously for the time to come. My own judgment having once betrayed me, must be suspected. Many formidable objections still forbid me to be a christian; but I hope the Spirit of God will give me understanding."

"That should be our constant prayer," rejoined Mortimer. "We are utterly incompetent to teach ourselves. But the Father of Lights has promised to enlighten them that seek him. This has been my earnest prayer since our first interview; and although my own case still seems hopeless, I trust you will be encouraged to proceed."

Glenville returned to his apartments to meditate and pray. His perplexities gained ground, and he was ill-qualified to perform the office of a comforter. Happily his friend's state became less alarming, and his feelings more calm. In a few

days he was pronounced out of danger, and advised to leave town for the benefit of the air. Another visit from his father revived his spirits, and strengthened his religious principles. Mr. Mortimer rejoiced at the prospect of his son's convalescence, while that joy was unspeakably heightened by the change he perceived in his disposition, and the hope of his future piety and excellence. The tears he had shed over his infidelity, the anguish often excited by his depraved morals, and the alarm occasioned by his late catastrophe, were now happily succeeded by a train of the most pleasing emotions. He could now embrace him with the confidence and delight of a christian parent. His bosom glowed with sacred satisfaction, and he felt the most devout gratitude to God, that his late danger had become the means of so important a renovation. Arrangements were accordingly made for his removal from Town to the bosom of his father's family; where, it was hoped, the salubrity of the air, the kind offices of friendship, and the influence of religion, would hasten his recovery, calm the anxieties of his mind, and confirm his attachment to the sublime and cheering principles of the gospel.

CHAP. XI.

IN the mean time, the subject of this memoir became more sensible of his own embarrassments, and the dubious relief his late speculations could afford. When he returned to his own apartments, where the absence of external objects left him at liberty to look into himself, his doubts gathered thick around him, and he was overwhelmed with perplexity and distress. His avowed scepticism, the anxiety of his parents, his reply to Lavinia, and the confessions of his friend Mortimer, raised the current of his thoughts to the utmost agitation.

All his fine theories, which lately appeared so luminous, were now involved in mystery and darkness. The pillar on which he lately rested, had now slipped from under him, and he was left without a resting place. He felt like a mariner on the ocean without his compass, or a bewildered traveller seeking his way in vain through the in-

tricacies of a forest. Amidst the confusion of his ideas, and the tumult of his feelings, the light of truth and the hope of safety were alike obscured or extinguished.

He now began to suspect the innocence of unbelief, and was afraid the errors into which he had fallen, might prove not merely unfortunate but criminal. The guilt and turpitude of sin, were now impressed more forcibly on his conscience. He perceived it to be an impious violation of the divine law, a derangement of the moral system, the grand cause of misery, offensive to God and ruinous to man. A conviction of his own debasement humbled him in his own eyes. His pride, the pride of intellect and philosophy, was levelled to the ground. His cheerfulness forsook him, and he became the victim of gloom and despondency.

After his second interview with Mortimer, he endeavoured to relieve his feelings in a long letter to his father; in which he expressed his regret for the uneasiness his former letter had occasioned, and confessed that he had written it with too much precipitancy, not duly considering the effect it would have, or the consequences that might ensue from it. He then stated the process which had led him into those speculations, and the painful

conflict through which he had since passed. He lamented that his limited information had disqualified him to refute the objections of infidelity; and that his opinions had been so rashly formed and avowed.

At the same time he assured them, that if his weak judgment had betrayed him into error, and he had become the associate of sceptics, he had not disgraced himself by any scandalous immoralities. He was deeply conscious of his guilt in the sight of God, which he did not mean to deny or extenuate. He knew that his affections had revolted from the divine service, and lost that spirit of devotion it was once his delight to cherish. He had neglected the most important duties of religion, and treated its solemn truths with levity. And if nothing had occurred to impede his course, he might, in all probability, have fallen a prey to temptation, and gone with a multitude to do evil. He was truly thankful that divine providence had not forsaken him, nor left him to the impulse of ungoverned passions, although he had rashly exposed himself to the verge of ruin. And if his morals had in some measure escaped the contagion of bad example, he must ascribe it, under God, to the exemplary character of his parents,

and to the holy principles they had early instilled into his mind.

He then related the catastrophe which had befallen his friend Mortimer, the change of mind resulting from it, and the conversations which had taken place between them respecting their late scepticism. These circumstances had deeply impressed his mind, and would not easily be forgotten. The letters from his father and Mr. Ward, had likewise produced a similar effect, and led him to suspect the mode of thinking he had lately followed. He was, therefore, determined take a calm and deliberate review of the subject, and hoped he should be led into the right way. He implored the assistance of the divine spirit in all his inquiries, that he might find the truth, and be firmly established in its holy principles.

With respect to his esteemed parents themselves, he could assure them that his regard had suffered no decline, and that he had never ceased to feel the deepest concern for their esteem and happiness. While, therefore, he deplored the anxiety his late conduct had occasioned, he hoped they would overlook his imprudence, and assist him with their sympathy and advice. He was more than ever sensible of their kindness, and trusted he should always prize and enjoy their regard.

The writing of this letter did him much good. What, indeed, can relieve the heart when overcharged with trouble, like the free disclosure of its cares? When we unburden our anxieties to a parent or a friend, of whose sympathy we are confident, the mind is not only relieved of half its burden, but sustains what is left with renewed strength. Glenville found this to be the case, and for some days appeared to be disburdened of his thoughts, and restored in some degree to inward serenity.

But in a short time, the same despondency returned in a still gloomier form, and he at last could scarcely fix his attention to a single object. His thoughts turned involuntarily from his studies and engagements to himself and the cause of his perplexity. He lost all relish for the pleasures of society; and when his friend Mortimer left the metropolis, he spent the greater part of his time alone, and gave full scope to his pensiveness and despondency.

With these feelings he soon afterwards left town to spend a few weeks with his family at the Lodge. They were all anxious to see him, and hoped his return would both revive his spirits, and assist his inquiries. They received him with

great tenderness, and omitted no opportunity to render his visit pleasing and useful; when the favourable effect of his last letter was soon confirmed by his spirit and conversation.

Mr. and Mrs. Glenville adverted to recent events with the greatest delicacy, evincing no solicitude to converse on the subject, unless it seemed agreeable to his own feelings. They soon perceived, however, that he was always ready to disclose the difficulties which still embarrassed him, and to avail himself of their assistance. Their fears were, therefore, in a great measure dissipated; and they consoled themselves with the assurance that he would soon be restored to the truth, and again enjoy the faith and hope of the gospel.

But when the cheering effect of the first interview had subsided, Glenville began to relapse into the same dull mood. The vivacity of his disposition, which used to render him one of the most cheerful companions, seemed to be exchanged for pensiveness and taciturnity. He would sometimes sit for hours together without conversing with any one, apparently absorbed in thought, or overwhelmed with affliction. He evinced little relish for the pleasures of rational conversation, once so

delightful to him, unless excited by some question or circumstance of peculiar interest. He became one of the most absent companions, and was often rallied by his friends on the improved politeness of a city life, peculiar, they supposed, to the studious and learned, "whose heads were too full of wise saws and modern instances," to enjoy the commonplace discussions of rural society. Sometimes he was pleased with the joke, and joined in the general laugh raised at his own expense; but at others, it awakened dislike to mixed company, and induced him to seek a refuge in his own chamber, or in a solitary walk.

In one of these walks, he rambled further from the Lodge than he intended; and finding himself within a short distance of Mr. Randolph's, he pursued his course through the adjacent fields, influenced by a secret hope of meeting Lavinia. Mr. Randolph was fortunately passing the same road, and overtook the wanderer. He addressed him with great kindness, and, after some hesitation, prevailed upon him to walk in, and take tea with Mrs. Randolph and family. At first, Glenville was no less surprized to find himself at Mr. Randolph's, than they were at seeing him. He was at some loss, whether he should apologize for the intrusion,

or allow it to pass without any remark. Mr. Randolph's kindness, however, soon reconciled him to the circumstance, and he endeavoured to converse with his usual cheerfulness. Every moment he was hoping to see Lavinia, and yet afraid to pronounce her name, or make any inquiries respecting her. But he was disappointed. No Lavinia appeared; and he returned to the Lodge with increased despondency.

In a few days, he again rambled to Mr. Randolph's, but with no better success. As he was leaving the room, Mr. Randolph put into his hands a letter, which, he said, Lavinia wished to be delivered to him, if he should favour them with another call. "Is Lavinia at home then?" said he abruptly, as he took the letter. "No," replied Mr. Randolph, "she left home yesterday, and is gone to spend a few weeks in Devonshire." Glenville was struck dumb. His tongue refused to utter a single word, not even the ordinary adieu. But in silence more expressive than a thousand words, he shook hands with Mr. Randolph, and retired. Having reached a solitary path, where he could remain without notice or interruption, he opened the letter, and read the following contents.

Dear Sir,

Will you allow me to offer an apology for my incivility in not making my appearance on Monday, when you honoured my father with a call? I trust you will not impute it to any want of personal respect, or think me really averse to seeing you. It was my sole wish to avoid the embarrassment an interview could scarcely fail to excite, after the extraordinary manner in which you agreed to terminate our correspondence.

I do not mean to upbraid you for the unkindness and severity of your reply to my last letter. It was altogether so unlike yourself, that I could with difficulty believe it to be your own. I supposed, however, it might be written in a moment of angry disappointment, which your better feelings would condemn. I would not, therefore, resent the harsh and unmerited reflections contained in it, by refusing to meet you again on the common terms of friendship.

But it seems to me, on many accounts, most desirable that we should not meet for the present. It would only serve to revive painful recollections, which are much better forgotten. I have, therefore, determined to leave home for a few weeks, lest my declining to meet you, should expose me

to the censure of our mutual friends, and render your visits in the neighbourhood less agreeable to yourself. Forgive my troubling you with this candid declaration of my present motives, and with best wishes for your health and happiness, believe me to be,

Your sincere friend,

July 10th.

Lavinia Randolph.

Glenville's reflections after perusing this letter, were not of the most soothing nature. It seemed to extinguish a faint hope which still lingered in his bosom, and brought before him a fresh conviction of his rashness and folly. He returned home more depressed than ever, and for some days resigned himself to the gloomiest meditations.

Mr. and Mrs. Glenville were, at length, deeply concerned to witness the gloom that preyed upon his spirits, and overspread his countenance. Neither the consolations of religion nor the cheerful intercourse of society appeared to be of any service to him. All their efforts to restore his accustomed vivacity, were ineffectual ; and they began to fear, the dejection under which his mind laboured, might lead to consequences still more painful.

Finding other means useless, Mr. Glenville wished to try the effect of travelling, and thought a succession of new scenes and adventures might divert his attention, and revive his spirits. He was aware that Howard's distress arose chiefly from moral causes, which nothing but a correct and cheering view of the gospel could effectually relieve. But he thought, if his animal spirits should be revived by the cheerful impression of new scenery, it would render him more susceptible of the consoling influence of religion. He therefore proposed to take a few weeks' excursion through the western counties, to which Howard readily agreed.

Mr. Glenville and his son accordingly began their tour, and hastened to spend a few days in the vicinity of Bristol. There Howard trod the same paths, and observed with delight the same beautiful and romantic scenery which his sister Lucy had visited and described with so much feeling a few years before. But while this circumstance gave to the objects around him a peculiar charm, it likewise vividly recalled her mysterious dream, and opened afresh the wound inflicted by her death.

From the vicinity of Bristol, our travellers proceeded to Bath, and were no less pleased with the

beauty and richness of its exterior, than amused with the motley character and idle dissipations of its visitors. Here, indeed, disease often finds a remedy, and hope a tomb. The victims of mental suffering sometimes enroll themselves in the number of its invalids, and resort in vain to its gaieties, or its medicinal waters, for a cure. Howard might have done the same. But though he had often heard of the physician's skill, he knew that the Great Physician alone could remove his malady. Though he thirsted for the refreshing stream, the water of life only could allay his thirst. He was, therefore, satisfied with a transient view of the scenes and amusements of this celebrated resort. In its society he found little to interest or improve. The formality and sameness of its engagements soon became repulsive to his feelings, and he began to relapse into his former despondency.

Mr. Glenville next proceeded to Frome, on purpose to visit the forest of Selwood, where the immortal Alfred rallied his forces, when he effected the final overthrow of the Danes, and restored liberty and happiness to his people. Their visit to this interesting spot was highly gratifying; and the pleasure afforded by its local beauties, was increased by the politeness and hospitality of its worthy proprietor.

Leaving Selwood, they pursued their route by easy stages to Tannton, which presents to the eye of a stranger, an appearance of respectability and opulence. "This," said Mr. Glenville, "was the scene of Monmouth's rash and unfortunate rebellion, in which so many fell a sacrifice to the vengeance of an implacable monarch, and the cold blooded inhumanity of his agents. How many perished in the field without resistance, being put to the sword by the command of a mercenary and ferocious soldier! And what numbers were afterwards consigned to a premature death, under the form of law without justice, by the inhuman Jefferies! The recital of these atrocities would be too painful to be recalled, were it not for their auspicious consequences. Shades of the virtuous and brave Hewlings! Ye perished untimely in a rash but noble enterprize! But the memory of your youthful virtues and lamented fate, shall not perish! The tree of liberty, watered with your blood, resumed its vigour, and while it flourishes, will not withhold its protecting shade from your ashes!"

"I can never think of that unfeeling and contemptible tyrant, James the Second," replied Howard, "but with feelings of unqualified detes-

tation. And yet the brutal instruments of his cruelty, seem to have been, if possible, more base and perfidious than their master. When that ill-fated revolt had failed by its own weakness, one would imagine, policy, to say nothing of humanity, would have spared its feeble and harmless abettors. How execrable is the memory of bad men!"

"True," answered Mr. Glenville; "and yet Divine Providence overruled this circumstance, tragical as it was, for the public good. The blood spilt by the tyrant's orders, rose in judgment against him, and accelerated his fall. The development of his implacable disposition, left him scarcely a friend, even among his courtiers. The glorious revolution which soon followed in favour of William and Mary, was therefore effected with the greatest ease, and is no less to be admired for its unanimity, than for the signal benefits still resulting from it, to the liberty and happiness of our country. How often, indeed, does the wisdom of Providence bring good out of evil, and light out of darkness, making the worst passions of men, the instruments of their own correction, and the means of public good? We should, therefore, moderate our feelings in circumstances of distress, since those events which now appear most gloomy, and

those afflictions we most deplore, may, at some future period, be found to answer a wise and merciful design."

Howard took this hint to himself, and was silent. He felt assured of its truth, as confirmed by the recent experience of his friend Mortimer; and he was willing to think favourably of his own case.

Mr. Glenville and Howard next travelled to Exeter, and took a hasty view of its principal antiquities. Pursuing their course through Devonshire, they were charmed with the new and ever changing scenes of hill and vale, heightened by a distant view of the sea on both sides, visible at intervals. At Plymouth they experienced a kind reception, and soon found themselves in a pleasant circle of friends. The first day was spent in viewing the garrison and other fortifications in the neighbourhood, which had recently assumed a more formidable appearance. The next morning, they visited the seat of Lord Borringdon, beautifully situated on the east side of Catwater, and enriched with a handsome collection of paintings, and the most elegant furniture. They also, with a party of friends, visited Mount Edgcombe, and spent the day in traversing its romantic and shady walks, sometimes verging towards the sea, then

ascending the declivity of rocks, striking through dark and impenetrable groves, now secluded in the depth of solitude and stillness, and then again rising to objects of the highest grandeur and beauty, bounded by the adjacent shore, or the wide expanse of the ocean. On another occasion they ascended the Tamar, with the same party, accompanied with a band of music. As the tide bore them along its serpentine course, they were enchanted with its varying landscapes, including steep rocks covered with foliage, and rich pastures filled with cattle; the stream now appearing to terminate, and then turning abruptly to another point of the compass, and presenting to the eye novel and delightful scenes.

These diversions for some days occupied Howard's attention, and cheered his spirits. But the impression soon wore off, and he relapsed into his former melancholy. Sometimes he would silently retire from his friends, and conceal himself from the public eye, in some sequestered part of the garrison, or some solitary walk by the sea shore. There, in the stillness of the evening, rendered more solemn by the dashing of the waves, the voice of the mariner and the sentinel, and the distant hum of the busy town, he indulged the musings of

a wounded spirit, and fancied himself most happy in his saddest moments.

One night, having fallen to sleep in a pensive mood, he was roused from his slumbers by an alarm of fire, which had broken out in the adjoining house, and was spreading with great fury. The concourse of people assembled on the occasion, their vigorous efforts to extinguish the devouring element, and the confusion and distress into which it had thrown the family, roused the subject of this memoir from his lethargy to a vigorous exertion of his strength, in removing the furniture, and arresting the progress of the flames. Happily, the engines were successful in subduing the conflagration, before the adjacent houses had sustained much damage; while the incident was beneficial to Howard, and rendered him more cheerful in society, and more accessible to the consolations of truth.

During their stay at Plymouth, Mr. Glenville and his son were induced to hear a celebrated preacher, well known in the religious world for his peculiar and exclusive system of theology, and extolled by his admirers as an oracle of wisdom, more infallible than the apostles. The theme of his discourse was, the peculiar privileges of God's

people, considered as monuments of the divine sovereignty. Having sketched the marks of a true believer, he enlarged with great fluency and pleasure on his security and repose; advancing many things which appeared to Howard, perfectly new and paradoxical. He maintained, that "God had chosen and justified his people from all eternity, purely as an act of his own sovereign will. Being justified by faith, as the apostle speaks, is nothing more than the manifestation of God's purpose to the believing soul. Having received this manifestation from the Divine Spirit, we need not doubt the reality of our faith, since the essence of faith is the assurance of our own redemption. And though the believer must know that he is a sinner, yea, that his heart is a mass of sin, viler even than Satan, yet let him not deplore and bewail his sin, like a reprobate, as though he meant to dishonour the riches of divine grace, since his sins were all eternally foreseen and pardoned without a single reserve. It would be blasphemy to assert that God is angry with his elect, whom he has loved for ever; or that he sees any thing sinful in those who are justified. As Christ our surety became infinitely sinful, while he bore our sins upon the cross; so we become perfectly immaculate in the eye of

God, by imputation of the Saviour's all-perfect righteousness, in which the church will be clothed for ever. Why then should we fear our sins, which display the divine glory; or think of doing any thing in the great business of salvation, which the surety has undertaken to complete? The covenant made with Christ shall not fail, and he alone is responsible for the conditions of it. For though some will call you to repent and believe, as the conditions of salvation, they might as well command the blind to see, and the dead to rise. I tell you, brethren, that faith and repentance have no more to do with salvation than cursing and swearing; and they who say otherwise are the preachers of a yea and nay gospel. And though a child of God will be holy in the Lord's time, his holiness is not the evidence of his justification, nor the term of his acceptance at the last day. No; this honour belongs exclusively to faith; as it is written, 'the just by faith shall live.'"

His looks and tone of voice in delivering these dogmas, indicated the most entire self-possession and conscious infallibility, mingled with utter contempt for all who denied or questioned his opinions. But Glenville was shocked and disgusted to hear this farrago of divinity in a christian church. It

revived his former scepticism, and seemed to justify the severest sarcasms used against christian preaching by his late deistical associates. His spirits were depressed by the revival of past doubts, and he retired from the service remarkably dissatisfied and pensive.

"You seem rather vexed this morning, Howard," said Mr. Glenville. "I suspect the doctor's sermon, though admired by many of his hearers, has greatly displeased you."

"How can it be otherwise, sir," returned Howard. "If this be christianity, I can never become a christian. His doctrine is so repugnant to common sense, so hostile to the benevolence and moral purity of the divine character, so opposite to the plainest principles of justice and integrity, so calculated to cherish the worst passions and increase the moral debasement of our nature, so contrary to every thing I recollect to have read in scripture, that it has filled me with horror and disgust. And yet the doctor delivered his opinions with all the assurance of an inspired apostle; and most of his hearers seemed to receive it with the same impression. It has thrown difficulties in my way, which I never suspected. But surely this cannot be the christianity of the new testament!"

"No, my dear Howard," said Mr. Glenville, "nothing can be more opposite, notwithstanding its pretensions. The doctor certainly admits the essential truths of the gospel; gives to some of them a peculiar prominence in his system, and pretends to maintain them with greater fidelity and zeal than christian ministers in general. But so much of the beauty and glory of the christian system is discarded or overlooked by him, and the parts maintained are so horribly distorted and abused, as to render the doctor's christianity altogether a different thing from the christianity of the apostles. It is like a skeleton taken from the charnel house, compared with the symmetry and vigour of the human frame in the healthiest manhood. It is a monster of his own creation, without form or beauty, no less offensive to the christian who receives his faith from the word of God, than disgusting to the philosopher who simply appeals to reason and common sense. I don't wonder, therefore, at your feelings."

"How then," said Howard, "will you account for the spread of these monstrous absurdities? the enthusiasm with which the doctor's farrago is listened to? and the avidity with which many religious people receive his writings? In an age so

enlightened, one would think it impossible for such perversions of christianity to gain a dozen proselytes."

"Enlightened age! aye, enlightened age, doubtless!" said Mr. Glenville sarcastically. "And yet, Howard, enlightened as this age is, it has witnessed the support of Johanna Southcote's imposture, and the revival of popish miracles, and other indications of credulity and mental prostration, scarcely inferior to the dark ages. There is nothing, indeed, too absurd and monstrous for the misguided imagination of men to invent or receive when it discards the standard of truth, and fashions to itself a religion flattering to its own predilections. We need not be at a loss, therefore, to account for the spread of antinomian corruptions. In this heresiarch's theology, absurd and antichristian as it is, there is something uncommonly gratifying to minds of a certain cast, where religious feeling has formed an alliance with self-conceit, a weak judgment, and a fervid imagination. It is particularly pleasing to persons who have no relish for the simple principles and pure morality of the gospel, but would go to heaven in the easiest way, on terms which flatter the pride and indolence of the heart, and leave them nothing to do as the

means of safety, but to soothe themselves with the assurance of their own election. When such persons, in the outset of a religious life, feel the anguish of a wounded conscience, and are not speedily consoled by the legitimate influence of the gospel, they will eagerly embrace the relief held forth by such doctrines, which offer an immediate requiem to their remorse for the past, and to their anxiety for the future. When persons, through an imperfect education, and a partial knowledge of scripture, feel a particular dread of being charged with self-righteousness; when they conceive the influence of the Divine Spirit to be separate from the written word; and when they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; they will easily fall a prey to the seductive errors of antinomian demagogues. In short, Howard, when you consider how gratifying it is to the depraved mind, to enjoy the privileges and prospects of the christian in the highest assurance, without being subject to moral responsibility, or burdened with the care of progressive sanctification, you will cease to wonder at the avidity with which these errors are received by the carnivorous and swinish spirits of the christian world."

"Oh, I can now easily account for it," said

Howard; "but one would hope their pernicious tendency would sufficiently prevent well-disposed minds from receiving them. If they were merely speculative errors, one might laugh at their absurdity. But their practical effect can scarcely fail to be pernicious. What, indeed, can be the fruit of antinomianism in theory, but unrestrained immorality in practice?"

"We must not condemn people indiscriminately," replied Mr. Glenville. "The pernicious tendency of this system may, in some cases, be counteracted by other causes of a constitutional or religious nature. If it be embraced by a man of strong sensual propensities, he will most likely continue his sensualities under the sanction of his creed. His voluptuousness will neither disturb his conscience, nor obscure his faith; but he will think himself as much a child of God in the indulgence of his depravity, as in the exercise of prayer; and will perhaps go from one to the other with perfect composure. But many who imbibe these notions, are persons of a cool phlegmatic character, who have little or no propensity to the grosser vices, and may in this respect live irreproachably. But even in these cases, antinomianism is like a protecting shade, under which the vices of the

mind, pride, self-flattery, indolence, deceit, bitterness, calumny, and all uncharitableness, may live and flourish. The better sort of its supporters are, therefore, mostly distinguished by their zeal for orthodoxy, separate from its moral influence; by a sectarian and exclusive attachment to their own party; by an excessive thirst for the excitement of strong religious feeling; and by a fastidiousness in hearing the word of truth, which scarcely one preacher in a hundred can gratify. It moreover often generates a captious and dividing spirit, which destroys the peace of christian societies, and scatters abroad the seeds of animosity and contention. In many cases, the energy of natural affection is impaired, and the purest sentiments of sympathy and friendship extinguished, by its paralyzing influence. Sometimes a total apathy to moral goodness ensues; and its votaries resign themselves to a cold unfeeling selfishness, averse to all the objects and exertions of christian benevolence. And to complete the iniquity of the system, its selfishness is at last justified under pretence of honouring God as the sole author and instrument of his own plans. You cannot, therefore, my dear Howard, be more opposed to this heresy, than I am. And you may rest assured, it receives

no countenance from the word of God, however detached phrases may be adduced and distorted in its favour. I hope then, you will not allow this mass of error, nor any other misrepresentations of the christian doctrine, to retard your reception of the pure gospel of Christ, in which the riches of divine grace are inseparable from the moral recovery and final perfection of our nature."

"But you must confess, sir," replied Howard, "that these discordant views of christian doctrine, so positively maintained by different parties, are very perplexing to a serious inquirer after truth. I am sometimes ready to relinquish the subject in despair, though my better judgment tells me that other men's errors will be no excuse for my unbelief. I am willing to receive christianity from the writings of the apostles, and not from the fallible representations of its present teachers. And though I would wish to hear every preacher with candour and respect, yet I am strongly reminded of that caution, 'Take heed how ye hear; take heed what ye hear; and why even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?'"

"You will do well to act upon these principles, Howard," said Mr. Glenville; "and from my own experience, I have no doubt the result will be

favourable. But with respect to sectarian peculiarities it is needless to perplex your mind. There are three kinds of errors to be avoided, and systematically opposed. The first, by human additions and cumbrous rites, overshadows the beauty and represses the moral strength of christianity, like David when he was clothed in Saul's armour, and unfit to meet the Philistine. The second, preserves its exterior form and simplicity; but, by rejecting or explaining away its essential principles, impairs its vital and quickening influence, till it becomes a mere cold inanimate system of morals. The third, abuses and perverts its doctrine to the destruction of its moral power, till it resembles the lethargy of a bloated epicure, which exhibits marks of a fatal gangrene, and will soon become a disgusting mass of putridity and death. If these extremes are strenuously opposed, all intermediate opinions, though chargeable with shades of error, may consist with christian charity and co-operation. And though we cannot but lament the separations which prevail among christians, yet I believe our charity and co-operation, even within these limits, will embrace the great body of the christian church, the sound and healthful part of all denominations. Beyond this, what need we more?"

Howard acquiesced in these sentiments, and felt his mind relieved from the doubts previously excited. He had, soon afterwards, an opportunity to form a more favourable idea of the religious world, and the most approved mode of preaching. In the evening, they attended a minister whose doctrine and spirit fully justified Mr. Glenville's concluding remarks. There they had the pleasure to hear evangelical doctrine, clothed in simple and perspicuous phraseology, explained and enforced by easy illustrations and a train of clear and cogent arguments, and delivered with unaffected simplicity and manly grace. Like the best specimens of true eloquence ancient and modern, his manner was equally remote from the frigid formality and elegant precision of a dull inanimate lecturer, and the crude incoherent rhapsodies of an ignorant and boisterous declaimer.

The subject of the preacher's discourse was, the suitableness of the gospel to man's moral necessities, viewed as an evidence of its divine origin. He considered man as the subject of ignorance, guilt, moral imbecility, and suffering; for which no systems of philosophy have yet found adequate relief. But christianity contains a provision of knowledge, for our ignorance; of pardon, for our guilt; of divine assistance, for our weakness; and

the prospect of eternal life, to relieve our sorrows, and support us in the view of death. These sentiments he explained and established with great perspicuity and effect. And then, toward the close of his discourse, he addressed those whose minds had been perplexed by the objections of modern sceptics. He would not then call their attention to the direct and historical evidences of the christian doctrine, but entreat them simply to consider its adaptation to themselves as accountable and immortal beings, and the claim it had to a most cordial reception. If viewed in this light, they would see the futility of all objections; and embrace the gospel with transport as the sure word of God.

Howard listened to the preacher with deep interest, and retired from the service much gratified with the discourse. It in some measure relieved him from the burden of desponding thoughts, and restored him to greater cheerfulness. He began to think more favourably of the christian world, and to enjoy more pleasure in society. Having spent the time allotted for their excursion, Mr. Glenville and his son returned from Devonshire by a different route; and upon their arrival at the Lodge, Howard received from his friend Mortimer, the letters contained in the following chapter.

CHAP. XII.

Surry, August 30.

My dear Glenville,

I will now endeavour to fulfil my promise of writing to you, though I fear the contents will be less deserving your perusal than I could wish. It will, I am sure, give you pleasure to learn that my convalescence has been improving since I left London; and that I now find myself much recovered both in health and spirits. I still feel considerable debility, and am fearful my constitution has been seriously impaired. But I hope time and a proper regimen, with the favour of Divine Providence, will restore its vigour, and prepare me for an active and useful life.

The friendship which has subsisted between us for the last year or two, and the important effects resulting from it, induce me to communicate to

you a full disclosure of my past history and my present thoughts. Indeed, you have a just claim upon me to do so. If I know any thing in the least calculated to promote your benefit, I am bound by the strongest obligations, by the ties of friendship and the requirements of religion, to make it known. The injury you have received from my acquaintance, demands all the reparation in my power. And if any thing in the course of my experience should be the means of reviving your early sentiments, and restoring your faith in the gospel to its former strength, it would afford me the highest satisfaction, and render the memory of past events less painful. I am, therefore, induced to lay before you a hasty sketch of my history before the commencement of our acquaintance, whence you will more easily appreciate the change of views and feelings I have recently experienced.

When you first perceived the effect of my late disaster, and expressed your surprise at my agitation and alarm, I suspect you ascribed it to a partial derangement of intellect, or to a certain mysterious dread of death, often felt by weak minds. But I can assure you, Glenville, neither of these was the cause of my distress. I do not

that awaited me. These ideas rushed into my mind with overwhelming force, like a flood of light. All the attempts which my pride, my scepticism, and the expected sarcasms of my companions, made against them, were in vain. Every thing seemed altered. The light in which I began to view things was wholly new. I was astonished at myself and the mysterious change my thoughts had experienced. I felt like a blind man restored to sight, or a person who had passed his life in the mines of Danemora, suddenly raised to the summit of a mountain in some foreign country, amidst wide and affecting scenes. You might, therefore, well be surprized at the sentiments I expressed.

I need not remind you, that my father was educated for the christian ministry, and has now for a series of years discharged its duties with fidelity and success. Though he has neither acquired nor sought popularity, yet he has always moved in a respectable sphere, and been highly esteemed within the circle of his own labours. And though his talents as a preacher may not be of the first order, yet I think his public instructions always indicate a well-informed and superior mind. Not having undertaken the ministry from mercenary considerations, or merely as a liberal profession,

but from the nobler motives of a christian advocate, it has evidently been his study and delight to perform its functions in the most honourable and efficient manner. He has, therefore, laboured with unwearied assiduity for the improvement of his flock. And while it is to be feared that many have made but little use of his example and advice, yet all will acknowledge the value of his instructions, and his affectionate concern for their happiness.

Conducting his public services upon this principle, you will not suppose, Glenville, that my father could be inattentive to the private duties, or less concerned for the spiritual interests of his own family. He was, indeed, anxious that the principles recommended in his discourses, should be so exemplified in himself and the members of his family, as to afford the people an evidence of their efficacy, and a living example of domestic piety and affection, which they might safely follow. It was his endeavour to adopt a course of family discipline by which the common duties of life might be performed, and its social affections cherished, under the mild but sacred authority of religion. There was nothing like severity in his conduct; nor had any of his children reason to

complain that the reins of parental authority were held too tight. He was rather kind and indulgent, in some cases, perhaps, even to excess. At the same time, he wisely imposed a salutary restraint upon our wills, hoping to check the impulse of passion, direct the choice of our companions, and render our amusements and pleasures consistent with the duties of religion, and the formation of proper habits. And certainly we have no reason to regret any of his injunctions, though we might then, perhaps, think them unnecessary or severe.

Our Sundays in particular, were religiously employed. We attended divine service both parts of the day, and were afterwards required to give an account of what we had heard. The intervals were likewise occupied in an easy course of catechetical instruction, designed to store the mind with scripture knowledge, and give us a general view of its evidences and doctrines. But there was nothing burdensome or gloomy in these engagements. It was my father's wish that religion should always be exhibited in a cheerful aspect, so as to make her most solemn duties pleasing. In short, whether he directed our attention to learning or religion, he was anxious that we should act well of our own accord, and not from the mere influ-

ence of authority or fear. We had no cause to find fault with his orders, though the levity and waywardness of childhood too often indisposed us to make a right use of them.

In these efforts of parental wisdom and affection, my beloved mother, now receiving her reward in glory, very largely shared. She not only approved and seconded my father's plans, but employed the tenderest and most efficient means for our improvement. I now love to remember the wisdom and gentleness with which she instructed us on a Sabbath evening, reproved us for our faults, urged us to remember our father's excellent advice, and offered many fervent prayers for our welfare. It was impossible to help loving her, though, alas! we were so inconstant in shewing it. I distinctly recollect the deep impressions her kind expostulations sometimes made upon me, and the resolutions I formed, in consequence, to "honour and obey my parents in all things in the Lord." If then the ties of nature entitled them to gratitude and love, how unspeakably were those claims heightened by the excellence of their character, and their unwearied exertions for our good!

But notwithstanding these early advantages and resolves, I must confess that my behaviour, even

in childhood, was sometimes very undutiful. My propensities soon became headstrong and impetuous, and often betrayed me into mischief. Passionate and self-willed, I frequently transgressed what I knew to be the bounds of duty; and by a variety of delinquencies, incurred the displeasure of my parents, and deserved correction. These faults were likewise sometimes aggravated by sullenness of temper, or gusts of resentment, which, no doubt, caused them many a sigh, and many a tear. I can now imagine what secret unexpressed and inexpressible anguish sometimes rent their feelings, when they perceived these early indications of a depraved heart, and began to picture to their fears its remote consequences. Alas! how many secret pangs pierced the heart of my beloved mother, while I was following the impulse of a wayward temper, with all the levity and frolicsomeness of boyhood! How many actions, looks, and words, which have fallen into oblivion, and of which I thought nothing at the time, wounded the tenderness of her feelings, and became accessory to the disease which preyed upon the delicacy of her constitution, and brought her prematurely to the grave! What then would she have felt, had her life been spared to hear the reports of my late

conduct in the metropolis, which would have pierced like a dagger through her bosom! Alas! how little do children think of the effects of their disobedience, and the dark catalogue of crimes they will have to answer for, in bringing their fond parents with sorrow to the tomb!

Sometimes I felt the force of this sentiment, and a seasonable admonition made its way to the heart. My conscience sharply reproved me, and I became unhappy. For a few weeks together, at different intervals, I felt the force of religious impressions, and promised to amend my conduct, and govern my passions. This was the case when sickness and death happened in the family, or among the young people of our acquaintance, which my father carefully improved. My mother's illness and decease especially enforced these sentiments, and led me to form many pious resolves. For though I was scarcely old enough to appreciate the irreparable loss of so kind a mother, yet my grief on her account was sincere and ardent. Her conversation towards the close, and the affecting manner in which she embraced and admonished us for the last time, in the view of death, made a deep impression on the whole family, and, for a while, checked the levity and perverseness of my disposition.

But in a few months these impressions wore off, and my temper became more wayward and troublesome. And though I pursued my studies with some diligence, so as to secure a share in my father's approbation, I was nevertheless guilty of many faults, and made far less improvement than my advantages required. Sometimes I began to feel the irksomeness of restraint, and maintained the appearance of good behaviour and a reverence for religion, more from custom and authority than from choice.

After my removal to the metropolis, this propensity increased. I seemed to be emancipated from control, and at liberty to consult my own inclinations only. For some time, I abstained from any thing positively vicious, and observed the Sabbath with considerable regularity and strictness. In the choice of my companions likewise, the employment of time, and my general conduct, I was not wholly unmindful of my father's excellent advice. But this was soon followed by a different course.

Unhappily, the family in which I resided, were far from evincing a due sense of religion. Though respectable, and even moral and virtuous, in the ordinary acceptance of the terms, they made no pretensions to piety, considered as a personal and

experimental principle; and were of course ill-qualified to recommend it to others. Their mode of observing the Sabbath was lax and unprofitable, including merely a formal attendance upon the morning service; while the young people intrusted to their charge, were at liberty to spend the rest of the day as they thought proper. The manner in which I observed it myself, was pronounced gloomy and fanatical; insomuch that my methodism, as it was termed, became the butt of ridicule among the young men of my acquaintance. In a country place, they said, these rigid customs might be very proper. But in Town, they were relieved from such restraint. Nobody concerned himself about the religion of his neighbours; and they might safely enjoy a little Sunday recreation without censure. If, like good christians, they attended church, and heard an excellent sermon in the morning, they might surely be allowed the afternoon for company and diversion. Besides, they said, the confinement of a sedentary occupation, and a city residence, obliged them to spend the Sunday as a time of relaxation for the benefit of their health, which it was as much their duty to take care of, as it was to read their bibles, or go to church.

At first I laughed at the charge of methodism, and was constrained by the authority of conscience, to show some regard for the sanctity of the Sabbath. But in a few months, these early principles sensibly declined, and I gradually became more lax in the observance both of its private and public duties. First the evening service, and then the morning, was relinquished, to accompany a few friends into the country, or to enjoy a pleasant excursion on the Thames. And by a frequent repetition of these Sunday pleasures, I at length became as disinclined to its solemnities, as any of my companions.

In the mean time, as you will naturally suppose, Glenville, I imbibed a strong predilection for theatrical amusements, to which, during the season, several evenings in a week were devoted. The scenic representations, the music, the talents displayed by some of the performers, the fascinating appearance of the assembly, the free expression of popular sentiment, and the enthusiasm often excited by a favourite actor or a popular drama, silenced every objection, and completely won my affections to the stage. The acknowledged tendency of some plays to ridicule certain fashionable vices, to cherish liberal and exalted sentiments, and to inspire the public with a just detestation of

tyranny and fraud, furnished me with something like a defence of its exhibitions in general, sufficient, as I imagined, to refute the objections of my friends, and justify my inordinate attachment to its recreations.

These resorts materially modified my taste for reading, and the general state of my affections. I now turned with disgust from works of a religious and philosophic character, and was pleased only with the lighter species of composition, in which fancy and passion are gratified at the expence of reason. These I perused with extreme avidity. The more romantic and impassioned, the more I was gratified. My imagination was often picturing to itself the transcendent delights and extraordinary adventures of a romantic life, till the common routine of things became disgusting.

You will easily conceive, my dear Howard, that this excitement of the passions, left me an easy prey to the influence of loose company, and the pursuit of unhallowed pleasures. The moral dangers of the metropolis, which all centre within the precincts of the theatre, found me too susceptible of their impressions, to offer any effectual resistance. The companions who had first induced me to profane the Sabbath, and exchange the pleasures

of religion for those of dissipation, soon drew me into courses still more exceptionable. So that from being led, I at length became the leader of their pursuits, and the most forward to devise and execute schemes of dissipation and vanity, over which a veil must be drawn.

But I have already exceeded the limits I assigned myself, and must therefore close this letter. I will try, however, to give you the sequel of my history in a day or two, and mean while, with the warmest affection,

I am, dear Glenville,

Yours unchangeably,

C. Mortimer.

Mortimer's second Letter.

My dear Friend.

In my former letter I gave you a brief sketch of my delinquency in the metropolis. But in pursuing those courses of folly and dissipation, my conscience was at first very troublesome. The sentiments taught me in early life, the habits of religion I had formed, the remembrance of my former resolutions, and the image of my parents' piety and affection, followed me in

all my wanderings, haunted me like spectres in solitude, and intruded themselves into the gayest circles. Secret convictions, and transient remorse, often stole in upon me in the midst of pleasure, raised the blush of shame, and, like the dagger that alarmed Damocles, or the hand-writing that terrified Belshazzar, divested my enjoyments of every charm, and made me the victim of real misery. The forced smile, the festive song, and the unrestrained mirth of my associates, ill-concealed the sting of conscience, and the dark cloud that brooded on the mind.

After enduring these reproaches for some time, and making many fruitless attempts to overcome them, I at last began to accuse myself of imbecility and superstition, in being alarmed by motives to which my companions appeared insensible. Thought I to myself, "how many persons of greater age and experience than I, not only pursue these very pleasures without any consciousness of guilt, but even laugh at the terrors of conscience as the effects of a superstitious education. And after all, perhaps, there is no reality in religion, nor any just reason why I should suffer myself to be distressed by opinions which may be nothing better than groundless prejudices. I

should like to see what the advocates of deism have written on the subject. Though I have been accustomed to regard them as enemies of the truth, whose sentiments are morally pernicious, they may, nevertheless, perhaps be right, and intend merely to rescue the mind from the bondage of superstition and priestcraft. I must at all events get rid of these inward tormentors, or relinquish the courses I have lately chosen."

With these impressions I began to read the works of Hume, Bolingbroke, Voltaire, and other celebrated deists, including Paine's *Age of Reason*, and other popular productions of that bold and plausible sophist. I soon became a convert to their opinions. Their reasonings against christianity appeared unanswerable. Their theories of morality and religion appeared rational and easy. Vice and virtue, moral obligation, the sanctions of religion, and the world to come, now assumed a different aspect. And considering the uncertainty in which a future state was involved, it appeared folly to subdue the propensities of nature, or deny oneself the pleasures of time, so amply provided in the present life, under a vain idea of preparing for some state hereafter which may never come.

But though these notions enabled me to pursue

a course of irreligion and self-indulgence without remorse, I soon grew weary of their enjoyment. Scarcely any of the schemes of pleasure we projected, answered my expectations ; and every new enjoyment, after a short trial, ended in satiety and disgust. I felt dissatisfied with myself and all about me, and after some of the most expensive gratifications had been resorted to, I returned to my apartments convinced of their inanity, and overwhelmed with vexation and disgust. Some of the writings just referred to, moreover, had given a more philosophic turn to my way of thinking ; and I began to feel some relish for pleasures of a more refined and intellectual character. This naturally drew me from the grosser dissipations I had before sought, and led me to try other sources of satisfaction.

With this design I persuaded several young men of my acquaintance to form a club for the free discussion of theological and philosophic questions. To this I was impelled by motives of ambition, and a wish to cultivate the talent of public speaking. Having early acquired some fluency of speech, I expected great applause, and supposed the party would regard me with becoming deference as their leader. The plan fully answered my wishes. My vanity

was gratified. I expressed myself on all the topics discussed, with all the boldness and dogmatism of a modern freethinker, and gained many converts to my opinions. Our meetings became a favourite resort, and for some time afforded me no little gratification and employment.

In this state, I first enjoyed the pleasure of your acquaintance, and used my utmost endeavours to bring you over to the same way of thinking. The course we pursued after that period, the influence of our meetings on your own mind, and the circumstances which occasioned my late disaster, it is unnecessary for me to relate. They are already known too well to you, my friend; and I fear, you will long have cause to regret their paralyzing effect on your virtue and happiness.

From this brief sketch of my past history, you will not wonder at the depth of my distress, and the terms of self-reproach in which I expressed myself. When the memory of these things came fresh before me, accompanied with a deep conviction of the reality of that religion which I had scorned, I was overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, and would gladly have found a refuge in annihilation, were it only to escape the upbraidings of a guilty conscience, and the humiliating view of my

own ruin. But the danger into which an act of criminal temerity had plunged me, has been mercifully overruled. God, "who brings good out of evil, and light out of darkness, who causes the wrath of man to praise him, while the remainder of wrath his arm restrains," has made the penal effects of my own folly the means of bringing me to reflection, and producing a change of views and conduct, which I trust will continue for ever. The danger is past; but I have no wish to relinquish the moral impression. Every day since I saw you, has confirmed the sentiments then expressed; and I now hope my future life will evince the sincerity of my faith, and make some atonement to society for past injuries.

During my recovery, I have read the scriptures through with close attention; and, with humble dependence on the Spirit of truth, have endeavoured to ascertain their authenticity and import. I have likewise read several valuable works on the deistical controversy, which have greatly assisted my inquiries, and enabled me to form a more adequate and decided judgment respecting it. During this course, I have found a free and candid discussion of various questions with my father, of great service. Objections, which still lingered in

my imagination, and difficulties, which at first appeared formidable, gradually gave place to correct views and the light of evidence. My own heart has been vanquished by the force of truth, and I now confess myself her willing captive. The sophistic reasoning once employed against christianity, now appears altogether untenable; and compared with the body of proof in its favour, weighs not a feather in the scale. I do not pretend that the credibility of the gospel is confirmed by that degree of evidence which precludes reasonable doubt, and may be called absolute demonstration. But it rises to a high degree of moral certainty, and includes all the proof we can reasonably require. Its difficulties vanish, in comparison with those which surround the most approved system of its adversaries. The more I examine its facts, the more luminous and convincing they become. And while its external evidences produce conviction, its intrinsic ones carry that conviction with irresistible power to the heart.

At the same time I am happy to say, the despondent feelings which at first distressed me, have subsided, and I now begin to enjoy the composure and hope of a christian. Though I must still lament and rebrobaté my infidelity and bad conduct,

yet I have found a refuge from remorse and despair, in the boundless extent of divine mercy, which the gospel reveals and communicates. Repentance is not the bitter draught it then was, but has mixed with it an infusion which not only soothes the spirit, wounded by a sense of sin, but spreads over its inward faculties a mysterious serenity and delight, which I have no terms to describe. Even the tears of penitence falling from the eye of faith, are sweetly mingled with "the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory."

But my friend will perhaps ask me, how and upon what principle, I have come to the enjoyment of so cheering a state of mind? I need not tell you how anxious my honoured parent has always been to calm my anxieties, and encourage me to rest in the promise of divine favour. Observing the gloom and despondency that still preyed upon my spirits, he urged me to state my reason for indulging them. "If," said he, "we were under a legal dispensation, if God dealt with us upon the strict principles of justice, and we could be accepted only on the ground of perfect obedience to the law; your condition would indeed be hopeless. But it would not be singular; the danger would

of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead; thou shalt be saved. The Spirit and the bride say, come; and let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely.”

“I acknowledge,” said I, “that I have often read these and similar texts with great encouragement. Nothing can be more consoling to an anxious mind, than the terms in which they describe the favour of God and the economy of the gospel. But I feel the greatest difficulty in applying these promises to myself. Having denied and opposed the gospel, after receiving the benefit of a christian education, am I not left without hope, to the final perdition of apostates?”

“Be assured, my dear Charles,” replied he, “there is nothing in the new testament to justify this exception. The terms in which it invites all men to repent and believe as the means of divine favour, include every case in which repentance and faith are possible. If then you have seen your errors, and renounced them; if you have been convinced of sin, and have forsaken it; you may

be assured of forgiveness. If you believe the divine testimony, and submit to the terms of the new covenant, you may enjoy the peace of mind which it affords in this life, and hope in its promises for life eternal. By believing the gospel with a personal and saving faith, we are reconciled to God through that medium, and upon these conditions, which it has pleased him in the wisdom of his providence to appoint. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

"This view of the subject," I replied, "is very consoling. It is suitable to my feelings, and encourages me to hope. If this be true, I may yet enjoy that happiness which my fears told me I had lost for ever."

"Of this I have no doubt," answered he. "It is the only ground of my own confidence in the favour of a holy God. I have always viewed the gospel in this light, and the experience of my public life has often ratified its truth and its sufficiency. But I would have you read and judge for yourself; and you will soon find the satisfaction which many seek but few enjoy."

By these and similar conversations, confirmed

CHAP. XIII.

IN perusing the confessions of his friend Mortimer, which brought many painful things to his remembrance, Glenville was sensibly affected. He felt more forcibly the folly and danger of infidel opinions, and pursued his inquiries after truth, with a mind more susceptible of its impressions. Deeply conscious of his errors, he was anxious to use his reason with modesty and caution. Divesting himself as far as possible of prejudice, he wished to enter into the school of Christ, not to dictate or dispute, but to receive the truth with the simplicity and teachableness of a child.

At the same time, many objections still lingered in his thoughts, which held his judgment in suspense, and checked the precipitancy of his decisions. He recovered the steps from which he had fallen, by a continual conflict with himself

and the ascendancy of truth was the result of its own victories. He admitted no principle till its claims were indubitably confirmed. And though he was ready to receive the gospel with the confidence of a true disciple, yet he withheld that confidence till the seal of its authority was evident to his understanding.

With these feelings he pursued his inquiries for several weeks with great avidity. He went through an extensive course of reading on the deistical controversy, and examined the different questions in dispute with all the patience and accuracy in his power. Having read the scriptures with close attention, and considered the design and argument of each book separately, and the references made from one to another, he proceeded to examine their antiquity, the history of their publication, and the series of facts which trace them to their respective authors, and establish their genuineness and credibility. By this process he perceived that the main facts of the old testament, with respect to the history of the Israelites and the neighbouring states, were attested by the most approved writers of antiquity, and must be admitted by all sober-minded men as historic truths. From Lardner's voluminous works on the Credi-

bility of the Gospel History, and his Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, with other books of the same class, he was more than satisfied that no credible account can be given of the origin of Christianity, different from the one contained in the new testament. From the writings of Locke, Newton, Hartley, Leland, and other more recent defenders of the christian doctrine, he saw that the theory of the christian faith as a divine system, is no less rational and sublime, than its facts and evidences are extraordinary and supernatural. The longer he pursued his inquiry, the more luminous and convincing its external proofs became; while its internal ones, arising from its doctrines, its provisions, its moral precepts and holy sanctions, bore sufficient marks of divine wisdom and benevolence, to justify the train of miracles wrought in attestation of its authority.

When Glenville compared these facts with the false philosophy which had lately misled his judgment, the immovable stability of the christian faith appeared no less evident than the visionary form and groundless insecurity of deism. Even admitting the most he used to think and say against it, there remained in its favour, a body of unimpeached evidence, a series of unquestionable facts,

which sufficiently account for the steady faith and devoted attachment of the christian. By the efforts of infidelity, the outworks of this divine system may be impaired, and the vain embellishments of its mistaken friends thrown down. But the citadel remains entire. Its strength has not been shaken, nor its beauty effaced by the attack. And while its adversaries exhaust their weapons, and indulge in visionary triumphs, the christian advocate can look down upon their assaults with a smile of pity, assured that the fortress of truth will be found impregnable.

Glenville now perceived that many of the objections urged against christianity, are drawn from insulated facts and expressions, which leave the main arguments in its favour untouched. Many arise from the antiquity and brevity of its records, and the impenetrable obscurity in which some of its circumstances are involved. Some are derived from the manifest corruptions of christianity, and are levelled against modes and opinions which have no foundation in scripture, but are wholly hostile to its authority or its spirit. Others result merely from the favourite theory or philosophic prejudice of the objector, which, perhaps, upon close inspection, would prove utterly untenable. In short, the

longer he read the scriptures with a mind open to the force of truth, his objections appeared fewer and less formidable, and the claims of the gospel rose upon his confidence.

In prosecuting these inquiries, Glenville conversed freely with his father and other intelligent friends, expressing his doubts and embarrassments, and listening with attention to their replies. He particularly availed himself of the assistance of Mr. Ward; and in the repeated discussion of various difficulties, found him no less candid than judicious in his modes of reasoning.

“I am greatly indebted to you, my dear sir,” said he to Mr. Ward, “for your oral instructions, and especially for the letters with which you have lately favoured me. I have found them of great service in the course of my inquiries, and trust I shall ever cherish a grateful remembrance of your friendship.”

“Nothing,” replied Mr. Ward, “could afford me greater pleasure than to be the means of promoting your happiness. Deeply as I deplored your late scepticism, and the danger to which it exposed you, I indulged the most cheering hope of your recovery. And I now trust your inquiries on this most interesting subject, have already brought you

to a favourable result. It will give me infinite satisfaction to know that you have found in the gospel a safe resting place for your hopes."

"I wish, sir," answered Glenville, "I could now give you that assurance. It is the object of my earnest prayer. I do indeed feel a strong persuasion that christianity is a divine system. But so many doubts and difficulties still hold my judgment in suspense, that I can scarcely say whether I believe or not; but am like the poor man mentioned by the evangelists, who, in an agony of doubt, exclaimed, 'Lord, I would believe; help thou mine unbelief.'"

"I can fully sympathize in your perplexities," rejoined Mr. Ward, "and shall be happy to assist you in removing them. Tell me then, candidly, what are the difficulties which appear most formidable, and from what sources your chief doubts arise. It is right to allow every objection its proper weight, provided we duly weigh the arguments opposed to it."

"The objections to which I allude," answered Glenville, "are so numerous, that I scarcely know which to begin with. And perhaps you will think some of them too futile and groundless to deserve a reply. But your candour encourages

me to proceed. Allow me then to mention first, the circumstance of its gradual discovery, which, supposing the necessity of revealed religion, seems scarcely consistent with the divine goodness."

"In what respect, sir, does this circumstance strike you as particularly objectionable?" replied Mr. Ward. "Have the goodness to state your ideas more explicitly."

"Why," answered he, "if the native ignorance and corruption of mankind, render the gospel necessary to their salvation during the christian age, it must have been equally necessary in former ages. Instead then of being communicated at different periods, and by slow degrees, insomuch that four thousand years elapsed before its complete discovery, ought it not rather to have been communicated in the full lustre of its evidences at the beginning of time, that former generations might have enjoyed the benefit of its instructions? Is not the gradual manner in which the christian revelation is said to have been completed, therefore, a fact sufficiently unreasonable to invalidate its claims?"

"In answer to your objection, my dear friend," said Mr. Ward, "I might say as St. Paul did on another occasion, 'Who art thou that repliest

against God? Shall the thing formed, say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Has not the sovereign of the universe a right to do what he will with his own, and to bestow the gifts of his munificence in that proportion which his own wisdom may direct? But though, in the absence of other considerations, it would be sufficient to resolve a case of this kind into the divine sovereignty, yet the fact in question admits a reply in which the ways of God may be justified, and the arrangements of his providence proved to be the best. The gradual discovery of divine truth, if impartially considered, will, in my opinion, rather confirm than invalidate the christian faith, and prove the objection you have founded upon it to be altogether untenable and fallacious."

"I should feel obliged, then, sir," said Glenville, "if you would have the goodness to state more at length, on what ground you maintain this sentiment, and by what train of argument you think it defensible."

"Why," answered Mr. Ward, "it is obviously consistent with the analogy of divine operations in the ordinary course of providence. In every department of nature, animate and inanimate, the works of God arrive at their destined perfection

by degrees. The produce of vegetation in all its variety, goes on by a regular process, from the seed that springs up, to the flower that charms us, and the full-ripe fruit that contributes to our support. In the primary article of human subsistence, there is first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. The stately oak of the forest was at first but a slender plant, springing from a small acorn, and growing, through a series of years, to its present magnitude and strength. The human body, in common with that of other animals, passes through the feebleness of infancy and childhood, before it obtains the maturity and full vigour of its powers. The mental and moral faculties are likewise gradually called forth, and by a laborious process, raised to their proper dignity and usefulness; while the improvements resulting from their exertion, in the discoveries of science, the works of art, and the order of society, are in like manner gradually matured. If then the author of nature, whose wisdom and power could easily have made all things perfect at once, has chosen rather to mature them by a gradual process, is it not reasonable to suppose that the system of revelation would be completed in the same manner, that the harmony of the divine operations, both in the

natural and moral world, might be strikingly displayed?"

"I admit the facts you contend for," answered Glenville, "but don't see the propriety of their application. The gradual maturity of things in nature, is best adapted to the physical constitution of the animal world, and is therefore compatible with the wisdom of divine providence."

"And so," replied Mr. Ward, "is the gradual communication of divine truth best adapted to the actual condition of mankind. The state of society in different ages, in a great measure resembles every human being, whose wants, at different periods of his life, are exceedingly diversified. The discoveries and institutions that were proper for mankind in the infancy of the world, were insufficient to answer the same purpose in the age of the apostles. The best of institutions are corrupted in the course of time, and the clearest evidences lose their lustre. If the system of religion established in the days of Enoch and Noah, had been designed also with sufficient proof for modern Europe, or for the Greeks and Romans in the height of their prosperity, its lustre would have been too great for the people amongst whom it was first instituted. But, by the lapse of time, and

the increase of nations, the capabilities of human reason were ascertained, the corruption and follies of the world sufficiently developed, and the necessity of a supernatural interposition on behalf of man, clearly and undeniably verified. Hence it is evident, at least in my opinion, that the patriarchal revelations were best adapted for the first ages of the world; the Mosaic law was well suited to the Jewish people in the early periods of their history; the prophetic admonitions were applicable to their condition when neighbouring states enlarged their intercourse; while the purer and more simple institutions of the gospel, were best adapted for the general reception of mankind."

"But admitting this," said Glenville, "do you not thereby weaken the evidence of its divine origin, and render it less capable of satisfactory proof?"

"By no means," answered Mr. Ward; "on the contrary, the gradual completion of revealed religion has rendered the evidences of its truth and authority, more numerous, clearer, and more satisfactory. If it had been delivered all at once, either to our first parents at the time of their creation, or to Noah and his family after the deluge, its evidences must have been few in number, and of

the same kind, and its claims on our attention must have rested upon the testimony of only a few individuals. Thus depending alone on remote tradition, or conveyed by a book written at the same time, but unaccompanied with circumstantial evidences, its authority would have been extremely doubtful, and the thinking part of mankind would most likely have looked upon it with contempt. But by giving us a revelation at sundry times and in divers manners, the divine wisdom has ratified its credibility by a numerous body of independent and unimpeachable evidences. Thus we have not only the testimony of miracles, wrought at different periods, and verified by many separate and unconnected witnesses, but we have likewise the accomplishment of prophecy through a series of ages, and the singular harmony of different dispensations, which the wisdom of divine providence alone could produce. On this ground I conceive the gradual developement and completion of the christian scheme, is rather a beauty than a defect, and a confirmation of its claims to our belief and obedience, rather than a plea for infidelity, or a valid excuse for indifference and irreligion."

"I acknowledge the force of this reasoning, sir," answered Glenville, "and should be willing to

relinquish the objection as untenable, were it not for the partial extent to which the christian revelation has been made known. If it be true, that all men are in the same state of guilt and danger, and stand in equal need of a Saviour, should not the knowledge of that Saviour, and the means of benefiting by his instructions and atonement, have been communicated in an equal proportion to the whole world? But the religion taught in the old and new testament, was confined to the jewish nation for a series of ages, and continues even now unknown to a considerable portion of the human race. Is not this, my dear sir, a very mysterious circumstance, scarcely consistent with the supposition that christianity is a revelation of the just commands and merciful designs of God?"

"The difficulty seems mysterious, I confess," said Mr. Ward; "but let me entreat you, my good friend, to remember that God has not only endowed all men with reason, and opened the volume of nature in every tongue, but that the first principles and discoveries of the patriarchal faith; were known by all the families in whom the different nations originated, and were conveyed by tradition to their descendants, from age to age, from one region to another. Had they rightly used these

advantages, and lived according to the light which they possessed, the state of the world would never have become so degenerate and hopeless, but the most debasing and infamous superstitions would have been unknown. If then the gross darkness and misery in which the gentiles at large were enveloped, resulted from the criminal neglect of the light given them, and the vicious indulgence of their own passions, the author of nature was under no obligation to give them superior light, but in discovering his designs, or communicating his favours, had an unquestionable right to choose the objects of his beneficence, and to confer on one nation more advantages than he gave to others."

"Doubtless," said Glenville, "the great parent of all has a right to do what he will with his own; to create beings of different orders; or to bestow unequal advantages on the same race."

"Certainly," interrupted Mr. Ward; "but the people of Israel were singled out by divine providence, and favoured with special revelations of the true God, not for their own sake alone, but for the general benefit of mankind. And though, for the sake of keeping them from idolatrous practices, they were forbidden by the law of Moses, to hold familiar intercourse with the heathen; yet they

were allowed to communicate to others the knowledge of Jehovah, and to receive them as proselytes to the true religion. It was indeed necessary that some nation should receive the truth first, and be appointed its messengers to the world generally. What nation then could have been chosen by divine wisdom for that purpose, more suitable than the jews, or what part of the world more proper or more favourable than Judea? It was the centre of the civilized world, and opened a way for the communication of divine truth to every other nation and family under heaven."

"Till the advent of the Messiah indeed," continued Mr. Ward, "no regular system was appointed to rectify the errors and reform the morals of mankind, or to diffuse the light and extend the influence of genuine religion. But when the great objects of his personal ministry were accomplished, and the divine authority of the gospel clearly verified by his resurrection from the dead, our blessed Lord commissioned his apostles to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, whether jew or gentile, barbarian, scythian, bond or free. He likewise, at the same time, furnished them with proper instructions and credentials, endowing them with power to convey their senti-

ments in every language, and to confirm the truths they delivered by supernatural works. In pursuance of this commission, the apostles went forth among the nations, preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, and labouring with all their might to promote the salvation of the world."

"Why then," answered Glenville, "did not the gospel spread universally? How came it to pass that so many nations derived little or no benefit from its discoveries? And by what means, or for what cause, was it afterwards banished, in a great measure at least, from many countries where it was first propagated and received?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Ward, "the blame cannot be imputed to the apostles of Christ, or their immediate disciples and successors. For they laboured in season and out of season, and counted not their lives dear to them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and be faithful to the ministry they had received. No difficulties or persecutions induced them to resign their charge; but, constrained by the love of Christ, and a tender compassion for the souls of men, they persevered in the great work with holy diligence, and at last sealed the cause of truth and righteousness with their blood. The weapons of their war-

fare were not carnal, nor the words which they employed marked with duplicity and guile. They coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. They aspired after no power, or interest, or fame. They abridged no man of his liberty or repose; they did nothing to justify any man's dislike; but with the meekness of wisdom, and the tenderness of love, they exposed the errors and corruptions of a degenerate world, and commended the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And yet, notwithstanding their benignity of spirit and irreproachableness of manners, bonds and imprisonment, insult and oppression, every where awaited them."

"Unquestionably," replied Glenville, "we must acknowledge and admire the benevolent activity and unwearied zeal of the apostles. They did all that human agency could do, to reform the world. We must, therefore, look elsewhere to account for the limited extent of their doctrine."

"Do you suppose then, my dear friend," said Mr. Ward, "that the blame can be imputed to something really objectionable in the doctrine itself which they delivered? In christianity, as propagated by the apostles, there is nothing at which a lover of truth and virtue could be dis-

pleased. It flattered no prejudice, gratified no corrupt passion, nor connived at any thing immoral in conduct. It required no change of national customs, language, or government; nor interfered with the politics of the day. It was wholly a personal and spiritual system, addressed to every man's conscience, and designed to promote the peace and happiness of all nations. It demanded the sacrifice of nothing as the condition of its discipleship, but the errors they had imbibed, and the vices to which they had been accustomed. If it brought certain strange things to their ears, it verified those things by sufficient evidence. If it enjoined new precepts, or enforced them by new sanctions, it proved the former to be good, and the latter to be divine in their authority. And yet, multitudes among whom this benign and holy religion was propagated, refused to receive, or examine, or even listen to its instructions; while many nations where it was generally received, afterwards mingled with it their former superstitions, or suffered its light to be well-nigh extinguished, and its influence almost, if not totally, destroyed by the Mahomedan imposture and the Romish superstitions."

"To what causes then, my dear sir," answered

Glenville, "must we attribute the limited extent of christianity, both in ancient and modern times? and to whom must the blame of that limitation be ascribed?"

"The answer is too obvious to be denied," rejoined Mr. Ward. "It can, in truth, be ascribed only to the corrupt passions, perverse prejudices, and vicious lives of mankind themselves. It is because they prefer darkness to light, error to truth, sin to holiness, and the world to God. Let God be true, therefore, though every man should be found a liar; and the arrangements of his providence justified, though all the world should be guilty and undone! The limited extent of the gospel, is no impeachment of its adaptation and sufficiency to answer the end designed, but displays in mournful characters the extreme depravity and incorrigible perverseness of our race."

"I should be sorry to palliate human guilt by impeaching the divine goodness," said Glenville. "Mankind are the authors of their own debasement and misery. But the questionable authority of the gospel, the apparent insufficiency of its evidences to produce conviction, still presses upon my mind as a great difficulty. If it be true, as the new testament affirms, that there is no other name

given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved, but by the name of Jesus; surely his claims to our faith and obedience, as our only Lord and Saviour, ought to have been confirmed by evidences which could not be denied? But the limited extent of the gospel proves that its credibility, instead of rising to absolute demonstration, is very questionable and dubious, and that many have thought, and still think it untrue. If then its avowed design is not answered, owing to a deficiency of proof, does not this defect invalidate its claims, and justify those who doubt or disbelieve its authority?"

"Your objection, my dear friend, is more plausible, than sound," replied Mr. Ward. "It seems to imply that the evidence of a divine revelation ought to be irresistible; and that if christianity were true, a conviction of its truth would have been produced in the mind by an overwhelming effusion of light. With respect to the prophets and apostles themselves, this was evidently the case; since the supernatural communications they received, and the miraculous powers given to attest them, must have removed from their own minds even the possibility of doubt. But to others, the proofs of their inspiration had no such power, but

rose merely to that degree of moral certainty, which satisfies the judgment, and requires belief. The evidence of miracles was resisted and denied by many who not only witnessed them, but even admitted their reality. We need not wonder then, if the evidence of testimony as contained in scripture, be doubted and denied by many in the present day. And yet there is evidence sufficient to satisfy the serious and unbiassed inquirer. How many in all ages have felt its sufficiency to pacify the conscience, and renovate the heart! How many has it excited to the noblest virtues which adorn humanity; to the greatest efforts of benevolence and devotion; and to the highest magnanimity and composure in seasons of difficulty and the view of death?"

"This I admit willingly," answered Glenville, "since it is evinced by unquestionable experience. But do you think this degree of proof sufficient to justify the high and exclusive claims of christianity? Do you suppose this alone is best suited to the natural and moral obligations of mankind? Is not much greater certainty than the gospel affords desirable, if not absolutely necessary? In other words, is not the want of irresistible evidence, in favour of the christian doctrine, a defect that in-

validates its authority? or do you deem it an excellence that indicates the wisdom of the divine plans?"

"I have no hesitation to maintain the latter," replied Mr. Ward. "If the evidences of christianity be considered in relation to the moral freedom and accountableness of human conduct, their adaptation and sufficiency will be clearly seen. We cannot conceive of any species of evidence, or of any system of instruction, that would produce in all men an irresistible conviction of its truth and divine authority, except it were an immediate revelation to every individual miraculously confirmed. Between a direct communication from the Divine Spirit to every mind, and a revelation made to a few individuals, ratified by miracles, and conveyed to the world at large by credible testimony, like the gospel of Christ, there is no medium to be imagined. But an immediate inspiration of every individual, by its overwhelming evidence and irresistible authority, would suspend the moral freedom of the mind, destroy our accountableness, and be totally inconsistent with the design and constitution of human life. When a man acknowledges that certain numbers added together, form a particular amount; or when he

confesses that the sun shines, because he beholds its meridian lustre; his acknowledgments have no relation whatever to the moral state of his feelings whether good or evil. But when a friend informs me of something which he has seen or heard, my belief or disbelief will in a great measure depend on my own feelings, and the opinion I have formed of his integrity and wisdom. In like manner, if the evidences of the gospel were irresistible, as you suppose they should be, or if every person were favoured with a revelation from the Divine Spirit, its truths must be believed alike by all men, independently of their moral taste and disposition. Whether they were attentive or inattentive, swayed by prejudice or open to conviction, pure in heart or shamefully corrupted, spiritually minded and devout or enslaved to the pomps and vanities of the world, would in such a case make no difference, but the faith of all men would be certain and invariable. Thus vice and virtue, praise and blame, could have no being; but all the operations of the mind, and all the actions resulting from them, would be necessary and mechanical. Faith could no longer be regarded as an index of the heart, nor fixed upon as the condition of our final condemnation or accept-

ance at the tribunal of the Great Judge. In short, my dear Howard, such a system would reverse every principle of reason and morality, and be altogether inconsistent with the true character and just government of God."

"These considerations it must be owned," said Glenville, "have great weight. Indeed, I must confess, that irresistible evidence and moral freedom are incompatible with each other. The objection must therefore be considered as untenable."

"Very true," answered Mr. Ward. "But a revelation confirmed by proper testimony, the evidence of which, though capable of being resisted, rises to moral certainty, is exactly suited to the moral constitution of our nature, and requires the proper exercise of our rational and moral faculties. The reception of its discoveries, and the enjoyment of its hopes, are intimately connected with the moral state of the heart, and render holiness of disposition the inseparable associate of true faith. Hence we are assured that the carnal mind perceiveth not the things of God; neither can it know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of

God, or whether its messengers have spoken of themselves. The apparent insufficiency of its evidences, therefore, instead of forming a powerful or even valid objection against christianity, serves rather to confirm its reasonableness and veracity, by showing its adaptation to our mental and moral powers."

"From these considerations, then, I suppose, sir," said Glenville, "you infer the guilt and danger, and inexcusableness, which the scriptures impute to those by whom the gospel is neglected and denied?"

"Most certainly I do," rejoined Mr. Ward. "It is in vain to plead the deficiency of its proofs, or the necessity of clearer revelations and stronger evidences. If the miracles wrought, the prophecies accomplished, and the peculiar providence manifested on its behalf, be insufficient to convince the judgment and affect the heart, other tokens of a divine interposition would likewise be of no avail. If, moreover, the suitableness of its provisions, the excellence of its principles and commands, the benignity of its spirit, and the happiness flowing from its influence to the real christian, have no charms sufficient to captivate our affections, virtue herself descending from heaven in all her loveli-

ness, would make no impression. The same disposition that now induces a person to reject the written testimony of the apostles, would have led him to reject the evidence of miracles, had he lived during the ministry of our Lord. It is therefore still true, that if men hear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, neither would they be persuaded, though one should even now rise from the dead."

"These are considerations of serious import," replied Glenville, "which I am anxious to impress on my own mind. I will prosecute my inquiries with a deep sense of the value of truth, and the responsibility under which our views and affections, no less than our lives and manners, are placed. If the difficulties which have hitherto pressed heavily upon me, are groundless, which indeed appears to be the case, I hope further reading and reflection will remove them. May the Spirit of truth assist my inquiries!"

"Persevere in this course, my dear friend," said Mr. Ward, "and you will come safe at last. If you seek after truth with a right disposition, I cannot doubt the result of your inquiries. And in the mean time, I shall be happy to render you any assistance in my power."

CHAP. XIV.

“SINCE our last interview, my dear sir,” said Glenville to Mr. Ward, “I have pursued my inquiries with some attention, and have read with increasing pleasure, several works in defence and illustration of christianity. My mind is in a great measure relieved from the objections I then mentioned; and the arguments you adduced, appear satisfactory and unanswerable.”

“I am glad you think so, my dear friend,” answered Mr. Ward; “and I trust you can now read the scriptures with the confidence and pleasure of a christian. If the psalmist, who enjoyed only the five books of Moses, could speak of them as his delight and his counsellors, a light to his feet, and a lamp to his path; with how much greater reason may we, who are favoured also with the new testament, together with the devotional and prophetic

parts of the old, regard them with the same feelings, and speak of their perusal in terms of gratitude and delight !”

“I acknowledge, sir,” replied Glenville, “that no person of taste and discernment, can help admiring many parts of the sacred volume, whatever he may think of its authority. Many of its narratives are written with inimitable simplicity, and possess those intrinsic and undissembled marks of truth, which at once gain our confidence, and forbid the imputation of fraud, or the most distant suspicion of concealment and dishonesty. Its descriptions of the divine character and government, and the strains of devotion uttered by the sacred writers, are not only uncommonly sublime and beautiful in point of composition, but evince a loftiness of thought, and a consistency of pious feeling, which has no parallel in the most eloquent productions of ancient or modern literature. Many of the prophecies, likewise, particularly those of Isaiah and Daniel, so accurately describe a series of the most important events in the subsequent history of the world, that no human ingenuity, in the absence of inspiration, could have described or imagined them. The general theory of the sacred volume, which may be traced through all its

writers, considered as an expedient designed by divine wisdom for the redemption and final happiness of mankind, is so different from the leading character of all other writings, and yet so suitable to the nature and wants of men, and so worthy of the divine sanction and appointment, that no adequate cause can be assigned for it, if its divine origin be denied. The moral precepts of scripture are universally admired even by unbelievers, not only for their general propriety and excellence, but for the tone of elevation which pervades their principles, and the superiority of the motives by which virtue and piety are enforced. And yet the writers of these books lived in ages remote from each other. They belonged to a nation undistinguished in the annals of literature, and derived, for the most part, few if any advantages from philosophy and science. And some of them at least, appear to have moved in circumstances, or been devoted to avocations, by no means favourable to extraordinary elevation of mind. I cannot, therefore, deny their claim to the inspiration of God, nor help reading them with profound deference and delight."

"Your ideas of the sacred volume," answered Mr. Ward, "thus far seem perfectly correct.

And yet you express yourself with some reserve, as though there were some parts of scripture that afford you less satisfaction, respecting which, perhaps, you still entertain serious doubts."

"I must confess that to be the case," replied Glenville; "for though I read the scriptures generally with great pleasure, there are some parts which excite very different feelings, and appear scarcely reconcilable with the common principles of morality, much less with the doctrine of a plenary inspiration. With respect to merely verbal obscurities, which render the sense of many passages, particularly in the old testament, ambiguous, and occasion the different constructions adopted by critics and commentators, I presume they arise from the high antiquity of the books themselves, and the oblivion which has befallen many topics and events well known to the writers. But is it not admitted on all hands, sir, that many variations have taken place since the books were first written? which, granting their original inspiration, must greatly weaken their authority, and expose the reader to continual uncertainty and suspicion."

"To a certain extent," answered Mr. Ward, "this difficulty must be admitted. But in the

worst case, I do not think it so formidable as you imagine. Among the many thousands of various readings which have been discovered and collated by the labours of biblical criticism, there are none of sufficient importance to affect the credibility of a single writer, or weaken the evidence of a single truth. Many of them are merely verbal, and of no consequence whatever to the argument or sense of the passages in which they occur; while the pains that have been taken to preserve the purity of the sacred text, justify the confidence we have in its general integrity."

"But are there not certain facts recorded in the old testament, "said Glenville, "which prove not only the fallibility, but even the immoral conduct of the writers? David, for example, was styled the man after God's own heart; and his psalms are still deemed sacred. And yet did he not, in the course of his public and private life, commit many things which it is impossible to justify? The same might be affirmed of Solomon, and other distinguished characters in the old testament. How then can their writings be regarded as the word of God?"

"You do not mean, I presume," answered Mr. Ward; "to deny that a book may be intrinsically

good, although the writer may have dishonoured his principles. It is no where intimated that the inspiration of the prophets was intended to render them infallible in judgment or perfect in virtue. They were endowed with supernatural powers for a particular object, to execute some commission, to vindicate some neglected truth, or to forewarn the people of impending danger. But these endowments neither suspended their moral freedom, nor placed them beyond the influence of evil, but left them, in all other respects, exposed to the same contingencies as ordinary men. Their narratives may therefore be authentic, their doctrines true, their precepts excellent, their devotional effusions pure, and their authority in the discharge of their prophetic mission unquestionable, though their failings prove them to have been men of like passions with ourselves. If then Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, or any other of the prophetic writers, either in private or public life, said or did any thing dishonourable to their own character, or repugnant to the divine law, we are not to suppose that it demands our approbation on the one hand, or invalidates their prophetic authority on the other. Moses, for example, notwithstanding his general meekness, in a moment of great provoca-

tion at the waters of Meribah, spoke unadvisedly with his lips; in consequence of which the Lord assured him, that instead of leading the people into Canaan, he should die in the wilderness. But this circumstance, however humiliating, neither altered the fact of his divine legation, nor impaired the credibility of his records, nor lessened the authority of his laws."

"This distinction, my dear sir, in a great measure solves the difficulty," replied Glenville, "and I remember many perplexing circumstances in the old testament to which it may easily be applied. But then it seems most proper that the character of a divine messenger should for the most part correspond with his message, and that no countenance should be given to human failings."

"Certainly, that must be admitted," rejoined Mr. Ward; "and I think the prophets in general were men of the greatest moral excellence. In estimating men's characters, we must keep in view, not two or three instances of bad conduct occasioned by extraordinary temptations, but their prevailing dispositions and habitual virtues, cherished and exemplified in the course of an active and useful life. Besides, great allowance ought to be made for the failings of distinguished characters, and the

falls of good men, in ancient times. We must not judge of them by the strict rules of christian duty as applicable to ourselves, under the superior light of the gospel, in this advanced period of the world. But we must estimate their virtues by the dispensation under which they lived, by the comparative state of society in their own age and country, by the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed, and by the cast of their mental constitution and public engagements. The religion of the Israelites was essentially national. Their principles and duties as the worshippers of the true God, were intrinsically blended with their civil rights and national prosperity. A good Israelite must have been a true patriot; and his zeal for his country's welfare must have been identified with the service of his God. Many of the leading characters recorded with honour in the old testament, were the chiefs of the nation, intrusted with the execution of its laws, and the defence of its independence. They were military men, compelled by the necessities of the times to pass their lives amidst the tumult and violence of war. But you need not be told, my friend, how unfavourable a military life is to the mild virtues of christianity, or what occasions it gives for the influence of evil passions.

Hence, in the catalogue of worthies mentioned in the epistle to the Hebrews as examples of the power of faith, it would not be easy to select a single name not chargeable with some offence. And yet, with all their failings, their virtues and achievements evinced the energy of religious principle, and justified the apostle in styling them 'men of whom the world was not worthy.'"

I am willing to make all the allowance candour requires," answered Glenville, "and think highly of many to whom you allude. But David, you know, was guilty of very atrocious crimes; and yet, as I said before, he is called 'the man after God's own heart;' which seems to sanction his vices, and set him forth as a model of perfect piety."

"We must not strain scripture language too far, my good sir," replied Mr. Ward, "nor affix meanings to it that were never intended. As the king of Israel, David might very properly be called 'the man after God's own heart,' because he was raised up by a special providence, to accomplish the divine purpose in the history of that favoured people. And though he fell into great crimes, which tarnished the lustre of his name, and impaired the prosperity of his government, yet he still

retained his office as the Lord's anointed, and performed achievements of the highest importance to the jewish state. Besides, it cannot be denied that his conduct in many transactions through life, manifested the noblest principles, and notwithstanding his failings, justifies the respect shown to his memory in the sacred volume. And you will readily confess that his devotional sentiments, as expressed in many of the psalms, accord with the law of God, and are well adapted to assist the devotion of his true worshippers in all ages, and might therefore receive the divine sanction from later prophets, as approved models of penitential and devout feeling. But the sacred writers, in recording the sins of David and other great men, never meant to justify or palliate what is wrong, but to hold them up as a warning to future generations. And the unreserved statement of these humiliating facts, so dishonourable to the subjects of their history, and so distressing to all good men, without any attempt to extenuate or conceal them, is a presumptive evidence of their integrity, if not of their inspiration. When you, therefore, meet with facts of this description, repugnant to the divine character and the spirit of a christian, you may safely regard them as mementoes of human

frailty, from which even strong faith and ardent devotion do not exempt us. So that while you admire their virtues, and are instructed by their writings, even the record of their faults may be salutary."

"I thank you, my dear sir," answered Glenville, "for this solution of the difficulty; and I should rest satisfied on this point, were it not for certain transactions of a dark and atrocious character, which these men are said to have committed by the express command of the Deity. I allude particularly to the indiscriminate slaughter of the Canaanites, and other nations of Palestine, by the command of Moses and Joshua; and the destruction of the Amalekites in the time of Saul, by order of the prophet Samuel. Surely, sir, an all-merciful and infinitely just God could never sanction, much less command, these dreadful massacres! involving the innocent and guilty in the same ruin, teaching cruelty as a part of religion, and giving to all the atrocities of war and conquest the sanction of a divine precedent!"

"My dear friend," interrupted Mr. Ward, "you have set these difficulties in a formidable light, and may well shrink with horror from the pictures of your own imagination. But if you

examine the matter calmly, I think you will find it less appalling than you suppose, and less repugnant to the known character of God, and the veracity of the old testament. I said before that the inspiration of Moses and the prophets, was not designed to render them infallible, beyond the limits of their prophetic message ; but even in the discharge of their commission, as to the manner and circumstances of it, they were evidently left to their own judgments. If, therefore, they said or did any thing inconsistent with their instructions, arising either from their own feelings or a misconstruction of the divine command, we may safely deny it to be a part of the will of God, and spare ourselves the labour of attempting to reconcile it with his character. In applying this rule to particular cases, extreme caution may be requisite ; but in the life of Moses there are several instances in which the application is made by the historian himself. And if facts arise in other parts which it seems impossible to justify, we may doubtless obviate the difficulty by the same method."

"This distinction is a good one," replied Glenville, "and may perhaps be applied to the destruction of the Amalekites by Samuel, and to some other parts of that prophet's conduct towards

Saul and David. As he was not the lawgiver but merely the judge of Israel, invested with authority to execute the Mosaic laws, we are not to suppose that he always acted by immediate inspiration of Jehovah, even though he spoke and acted officially as his servant. And as he commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites without mercy, not by virtue of a new revelation made to himself from the divine Spirit, but by authority of the command given to Moses several centuries before, some of his proceedings in that affair, and his interpretation of the divine mandate, may have been wrong: you need not, therefore, attempt to justify every particular. But the slaughter of the Midianites and others, by the command of Moses and Joshua, admits of no such apology, since it was impossible for the Israelites to take possession of Canaan without subduing the original inhabitants. And if it be true that God delivered them from Egypt, and led them through the wilderness, with a view to their settlement in Canaan, it must have been his command that the Canaanites should be exterminated or reduced to slavery. But how could such commands, so fraught with cruelty and horror, come from the Spirit of God! I shudder to think of it!"

"I commend your feelings more than your judgment," answered Mr. Ward. "As to what you have said about Samuel's fallibility, I scarcely know what to say. I see many objections to it, and think your statement of the case can be admitted only with certain limitations. The Amalekites were evidently a predatory ferocious tribe, who lived by plunder, like the modern Arabs. They attacked the Israelites with great ferocity, and without the least provocation, soon after their deliverance from Egypt; for which cause the Lord commanded Moses to write it in the book, and rehearse it to Joshua and all the people, that Amalek should be utterly destroyed. If their descendants had been men of a better character, justice would have urged the reversion of this sentence. But they maintained the same unbridled ferocity till the latest period, and by perpetuating the crimes, entailed on themselves the punishment first denounced upon their ancestors. They appear to have seized every opportunity of committing their merciless depredations, when the Israelites were in trouble. And from the dying language of Agag, it is evident they had been guilty of some fresh atrocities, when Samuel commanded Saul to destroy them. Saul's com-

mission was, therefore, no less necessary for the defence of his own people, than the execution of a divine judgment. But, waving this point for the present, I was going to mention some considerations which render the conquest of Canaan, and the slaughter of its inhabitants, less revolting to the feelings of humanity and to the benevolence of God than you suppose."

"If you can do that, sir," replied Glenville, "it will afford me great satisfaction. My mind is open to conviction; and I shall be happy to consider any solution of the difficulty you may propose."

"I presume then," said Mr. Ward, "you admit the fact itself, that Canaan was conquered by the Israelites after their emigration from Egypt, when many of the natives were slain in battle, others exiled from their country, and the rest reduced to bondage."

"Certainly," rejoined Glenville; "no facts in ancient history are better attested. It would be as absurd to deny the achievements of Moses and Joshua, as to deny the victories of Hannibal or Cæsar. But how God should command this destruction of human life, is the great difficulty."

"Well then," said Mr. Ward, "consider the

conquest of Canaan, simply as an historical event, brought about by ordinary means; and in what respect does it strike you as pre-eminently horrible and atrocious? It must surely be acknowledged, that the Israelites had a natural right to rescue themselves from Egyptian bondage, and to have some territory assigned them for their inheritance. But where could they find one more suitable for their purpose, or to which they could lay a stronger claim, than the land of promise, the country of their forefathers? And it is obvious they did not invade the country from motives of ambition or the love of conquest, but to gain a settlement for the peaceable exercise of their own liberties and laws. Their right to Canaan was therefore, at least, as feasible as the right of Alexander to conquer Persia, or the right of Cæsar to subdue Gaul and Britain, or the right of modern Europeans to take possession of America."

"That I am willing to acknowledge, sir," answered Glenville. "And if the destruction of the Canaanites be compared with the slaughters committed by other nations, ancient and modern, in the madness of ambition, and the rage of conquest, its atrocious character is thrown into the shade, amidst the deeper colouring of still worse

atrocities. Considering the small extent of territory, I should think the numbers that fell in the wars of Joshua, bear no proportion to the destruction of human life occasioned by Timur Beck, Jenghiz Chan, and other oriental plunderers; not to mention certain renowned warriors, whose achievements are eulogized by the poet and the historian as the most splendid efforts of human energy and skill! The conquest of Canaan might, perhaps, rather be compared to the expulsion of the Britons from this country by the Saxons, or to the destruction of the Picts by the Caledonians. But how does this relieve the difficulty?"

"Why," said he, "the deist has at least no reason to speak of it as a case of unparalleled atrocity. And if the destruction took place in fact, it must have been committed by divine appointment, as the scriptures affirm, or by divine permission in the ordinary course of providence. But the permission of cruelties which he has power to prevent, is no less repugnant to humanity, nor less difficult to reconcile with the infinite goodness of God, than their actual commission or appointment. Nay, how many cases are there, in which the severest sufferings are inflicted by order of the most humane? When a prince or his recorder signs the

death-warrant of criminals, condemned to die by their country's laws, no one would think of charging him with cruelty. But if the same prince should permit his soldiers to massacre the people by thousands, when he might restrain them by a single effort, all would abhor and execrate his inhumanity. If then you believe in the infinite goodness of the Deity, notwithstanding the permission of so many horrors; why may we not equally admit the divine legation of Moses, notwithstanding the destruction of the Canaanites? At all events, when the former has been accounted for, the latter will cease to be inscrutable or mysterious."

"The difficulty is great on both sides, I confess," said Glenville, "but still there seems a material difference. In the permission of crimes, we suppose the voluntary agents are criminal, and will not escape with impunity. But if the Canaanites were destroyed by a divine command, the Jews who performed the deed, were innocent, if not laudable; which implies that God approves war with all its cruelties."

"If," replied Mr. Ward, "Moses had received an indefinite commission to spread his conquests over the world, for the sake of imposing a new

form of religion and government, this inference might be just. But the command in question was given for a specific purpose, confined within certain limits, applied to one body of people, granted under positive restrictions, and not allowed to be carried into execution, 'till the iniquity of the Amorites was full.' There are certain states of incorrigible depravity, in which the crimes and miseries of mankind render life a burden to themselves, and a curse to their infant posterity. All the means of their recovery proving ineffectual, the forbearance of God terminates, and their judicial excision is the consequence. For this cause the Antediluvians were cut off by a deluge, the Sodomites by a tempest, and the Egyptians by a series of plagues. At this state of hopeless delinquency the inhabitants of Canaan had arrived in the time of Moses; and from the excess of their depravity and crimes, independently of future punishment, it might have been truly said, 'Good were it for such men, if they had never been born!' Their destruction by the sword of the Israelites, was, therefore, the judicial execution of a sentence pronounced upon incorrigible offenders by the just ruler of the world."

"I allow," answered Glenville, "that God has

a right to suspend the life he has given, and to inflict punishment on the guilty, in whatever way his wisdom may choose. And when mankind, or any part of them, arrive at that extreme depravity which frustrates all means of recovery, it may be necessary to vindicate the rectitude of his moral government by some signal example of judicial destruction. But then it seems most proper that God should do this by natural means, like the deluge, or the destruction of Sodom, and not by the sword, as in the conquest of Canaan. For the execution of this tremendous order, must have tended to confirm the jews in habits of cruelty, and thereby assimilate them to the people whom they destroyed."

"According to our view of things, perhaps, it might be so," replied Mr. Ward; "but we have no right to limit the plans of the Holy One. If he had swept off the Canaanites by a pestilence, as in many other cases, the moral impression on the public mind, as an evidence of divine judgments, would have been very dubious and transient. It would have been viewed by the generality, merely as an awful providence, like an earthquake or a storm, in which the guilty and innocent are alike involved. And in commiserating the sufferers,

the hand that punished, and the cause of the punishment, would have been forgotten. But in cutting off the Canaanites, God designed to impress on the minds of men, and especially on the instruments of his justice, a deeper conviction of the reality and rectitude of his moral government, his abhorrence of sin, and his regard for virtue. Having therefore chosen the Israelites to be his own people, delivered them with a mighty hand from Egyptian bondage, and trained them to his service by a series of miracles in the wilderness, he made them the executioners of his judgments on a guilty and incorrigible race, and insured their success by the most signal tokens of his supernatural presence and authority. Under this impression, Joshua and his forces commenced and pursued their conquests. It is impossible to read the narrative without perceiving how deeply they felt themselves to be the mere instruments of heaven. Every victory confirmed their faith in the true God, and shewed them the fearful consequences of apostacy. Nor is there any proof that habits of wanton cruelty were generated by their victories. The laws of Moses were eminently favourable to humanity, even towards the brutes. And though the history of the jews, like other nations, contains

many things which shock our benevolence; yet it likewise records many traits of character and acts of generosity, which evince the excellence of their religion, and do honour to our nature in its best state of virtue and refinement."

"I feel the force of your reasoning, my dear sir," answered Glenville, "and will henceforth discard the objection. At all events, the difficulties in question cannot invalidate the positive evidence in favour of the old testament; and I think we may safely class them with other mysteries of nature and providence, which the disclosures of a future world will explain and justify. But in connection with these points, I have frequently heard some parts of the old testament severely condemned, on the score of indelicacy. But as the passages in question were not designed to be read publicly, and neither excite nor sanction lasciviousness, I perceive no force or propriety in the objection."

"Your opinion, my dear friend," said Mr. Ward, "is perfectly correct, and indicates your good sense and moral purity. I have now read the scriptures with attention for more than twenty years, and do not remember a single instance in which their perusal had a bad moral effect on my-

self or others. The infidel may charge certain texts with indelicacy, and make them the occasion of low abuse and sensual inuendoes; but in doing so, he proclaims the impurity of his own thoughts. 'To the pure, all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.'

"You are doubtless aware, sir," answered Glenville, "that some parts of the pentateuch, which describe the creation of all things and the economy of nature, are regarded by the scientific as unphilosophical and absurd. The modern discoveries in astronomy exhibit ideas of the universe, infinitely more magnificent than those of the bible, and induce many to reject the Mosaic account as fabulous and childish. Even some who admit the inspiration of scripture in reference to religion, relinquish its authority with respect to the natural system. But it strikes me that if one part be untrue, the inspiration of the rest must be relinquished."

"At least," answered Mr. Ward, "it would be very dubious, if not untenable. For though Moses and the prophets were inspired principally to make known the true God, and enforce the sanctions of morality and religion, yet it cannot be supposed

they would be left to teach any thing philosophically absurd. The friends of divine revelation should be cautious in admitting theories by which its credibility is impaired. Let the objectors be certain they understand the language of Moses, before they impeach his wisdom; and be sure their fine theories are well-founded, before they attempt to rear upon them a system hostile to the sacred volume. For my own part, I am sometimes astonished at the presumption and credulity of these sceptical philosophers, grasping with eagerness at the wildest and most improbable theories, which seem to countenance their unbelief, or furnish an argument against the gospel. When I review the history of human opinions, and see the speculations of one age, though supported with all the confidence of demonstration, overturned by the favourite reasonings of another, equally confident, and yet equally fallacious; I am often reminded of that prophetic saying, 'The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain!' I hope, therefore, your faith in the holy scriptures is too well confirmed to be shaken by arguments founded on a basis so sandy."

"Experience, my dear sir," said Glenville, "has already taught me the fallibility of reason, and will,

in future, make me suspicious of such theories. Nor do I think these and other difficulties in the old testament, would be sufficiently strong to shake my belief in the christian revelation, if the evidences of the new testament were decisive. For I believe many persons cordially receive christianity as a divine system, who entertain serious doubts as to the inspiration and veracity of the old testament."

"I am quite at a loss, Howard, to guess on what principles they can hold such an opinion," answered Mr. Ward. "Certainly the new testament is of greater importance to us than the old, as containing the facts and doctrines peculiar to christianity. But our Saviour and his apostles, not only gave their public sanction to the old testament scriptures, but uniformly appealed to their predictions and authority, to ratify or explain their own doctrine. If, therefore, they were inspired, the authority of the old testament is sufficiently established. It is, indeed, impossible to separate their claims. They must both stand or fall together. They are not to be considered as two different, much less as two opposite systems of religion, but as the same divine system under different aspects, in different stages of its develop-

ment. The same merciful design, the same doctrines, the same rules of duty, the same devotional affections, the same pure and exalted motives are common to both. The patriarchal, the Mosaic, the prophetic, and the christian revelations, are only so many parts of the same divine plan, gradual disclosures of the same system, adapted to the actual condition of mankind. Christianity is the perfection of this divine system. It is the same religion divested of her jewish dress, the splendid forms of a cumbrous ritual; and brought before us in the full day-light of truth, in all the loveliness of her own native, unassuming, but celestial attire. If then you are satisfied with the new testament, which I hope is the case, you may safely admit the old, and impute its ambiguities to their remote antiquity, and other causes which it is now impossible to ascertain."

CHAP. XV.

WHILE Mr. Ward was making the remarks which closed the last chapter, the conversation was interrupted by a gentleman, who called upon business which required immediate attention. He therefore left Glenville to his own reflections; and after an interview with his friend, and the discharge of a parochial duty which occurred at the same time, he returned to his study, and resumed the conversation.

“I fear,” said he, “this interruption has broken the thread of our argument. Perhaps you have thought of some further difficulties. If so, I hope we shall not find them more formidable than the last.”

“I feel the propriety of your former reasoning, sir,” replied Glenville; “and I think my doubts would soon vanish, were it not for some difficulties

in the new testament which have greatly perplexed me. I do not refer to mere verbal obscurities, which the labours of just criticism may remove. But some things stated by the four evangelists, appear exceedingly mysterious. Their manner of recording the same miracle or the same discourse, is sometimes very dissimilar, if not contradictory. Some of our Saviour's predictions respecting his second advent, seem very ambiguous. The apostles speak of the end of the world, as an event expected in their own time, and admonish their disciples to be ready for its approach. But as the lapse of eighteen centuries has proved these expectations to be unfounded, does not this failure impeach their claim to inspiration, and throw a doubt over the authority they assumed?"

"Doubtless there is some force in these difficulties," answered Mr. Ward, "but they are infinitely less formidable than you imagine. You cannot surely think the extraordinary contents of the four gospels, are a valid objection to their veracity, irrespectively of the evidence they adduce! This would be to adopt the absurd sophism of Hume, and to make our own experience the standard of truth and the boundary of possible events; which, if universally acted upon, would stop the spread

of knowledge, and sink the next generation into profound ignorance. We must examine the facts stated, by the wisdom adduced, and not by our own prejudices."

"That I acknowledge, sir," replied Glenville; "but then the statements of different witnesses ought to be unanimous; or they impair each other's testimony."

"Why, as to the variations found in the four gospels," continued Mr. Ward, "not one has been proved to contain a contradiction. Many of them arise from the brevity of the narrative, and the different aspect in which the same event was viewed by the writers. A little care will easily reconcile them. But these minor discrepances prove that the evangelists were not mere copyists, transcribing from a common document which they had agreed to publish, but independent witnesses of the facts they record. Had there been any collusion, such variations would have been studiously avoided. But they all write like men conscious of integrity, and determined to state what they most certainly knew to be the truth. Their variations, therefore, instead of weakening, confirm the credibility of the whole."

"Your conclusion, my dear sir, is so far satis-

factory," said Glenville. "But how will you account for the ambiguity and seeming failure of certain prophecies to which I before alluded?"

"With respect to their ambiguity, sir," answered Mr. Ward, "I do not see how it could well be otherwise. A prophecy minutely describing some future event, would either frustrate itself by its own explicitness, or might be charged by an objector as the cause of its own accomplishment, and therefore be deemed no prophecy at all. Hence the terms in which our Lord foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish state, though most remarkably and minutely verified by the event, were at the same time sufficiently obscure beforehand to prevent either of these consequences. And though some of the early Christians seem to have expected the end of the world in their own time, the idea evidently arose from a misconstruction of the terms used by our Saviour in predicting the overthrow of Jerusalem, and forewarning his apostles of the event. For I don't remember any case in which it can be proved that the apostles themselves countenanced this mistake. In those specimens of their discourses which Luke has recorded in the Acts, nothing of this kind can be discovered."

“But does not the language itself justify the construction?” said Glenville. “In the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew’s gospel, after foretelling the destruction of the temple, and the signs of his second coming to judgment, Christ said to his apostles, ‘Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.’ Is not this very extraordinary, if he meant to predict an event which has not yet taken place?”

“It certainly does appear so,” answered Mr. Ward. “But if we refer to the chapter in question, perhaps some solution of the difficulty may be found. In the third verse we are told, that as Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives, ‘his disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?’ These questions, though joined by the apostles, evidently refer to very different events, destined to take place at very distant periods. In our Saviour’s answers, the distinction was, no doubt, duly marked and sufficiently understood, though not preserved by the evangelist with so much formality as we might wish. But if Christ meant to include his description of the last day, as well as the overthrow

of Jerusalem, when he said, 'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled,' there could be no propriety in the verse following, where it is added, 'but of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.' If understood in this sense, which evidently gave rise to the mistake in question, these two verses almost literally affirm and deny the same thing; which is clearly inadmissible, and cannot therefore be the true meaning. But limit the former verse to what our Lord has said in answer to the first question, respecting the destruction of the temple; and apply the latter to the second inquiry, as to the signs of his coming to judgment, and the end of the world; and the coherence and propriety of both will be established. Upon this construction, which appears to be correct, none of our Lord's prophecies have failed; but the former were awfully verified within the time limited; while the latter yet remain to receive their accomplishment."

"This solution, my dear sir," said Glenville, "seems perfectly reasonable. But did not St. Paul himself sanction this error in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, where he says, 'This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that *we* which

are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then *we* which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall *we* ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.' ”

“ The language is very beautiful and explicit,” answered Mr. Ward; “ but we are not to suppose, that, in using the first person, on which you lay so much stress, the apostle absolutely meant himself and his contemporaries. This mode of expression is often used with great latitude, when speakers and writers, for the sake of energy, identify themselves with past and future transactions, in which they have no personal share. At all events, we should allow St. Paul to be his own interpreter. Hence, in his second epistle to the same people, written soon after, he expressly cautioned them against this mistake, foretelling the antichristian apostacy, and directing them to the second advent and the end of the world, as very distant events. ‘ Now we beseech you, brethren,’ he says, ‘ by the

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means ; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the son of perdition ; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself, that he is God.' Nor can it be supposed that this was a new invention of the apostle's to rectify a former opinion, since he expressly adds, 'Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things.' I conclude, therefore, that St. Paul has been wrongly charged with a false or mistaken prophecy."

"Then you believe, sir," replied Glenville, "that the error adopted by some of the early christians on this point, received no countenance from any of the apostles, nor from any parts of the new testament."

"Most certainly I do," rejoined Mr. Ward. "St. Peter mentions the same subject in his second epistle, and anticipates this very objection, as made

by scoffers in the last age. 'For there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation?' In his view, therefore, the day of the Lord was a very distant event; though he affirms it will nevertheless come as a thief in the night. The same remark will apply to the scenes of the apocalypse, which evidently describe a succession of events, through a long series of ages, before the second advent of Christ, and the final consummation of all things. And though the apostles urged the churches in their own day to piety and watchfulness, by considerations drawn from the day of judgment; yet the hour of death, which often comes suddenly, and the immediate judgment which follows it, render such motives, at all times, no less proper than salutary and impressive. If St. Paul or any of the apostles, had expected our Saviour's personal advent in their own life-time, the delusion would surely have vanished when the terrors of martyrdom were before them. But they retained the same hope, and used the same language, till the last. Observe what St. Paul wrote to his friend Timothy, in the immediate view of death:

‘I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.’ May you and I, my dear friend, follow this illustrious pattern of christian piety, and enjoy in our last hours, the same delightful and well-grounded confidence!”

“I sincerely thank you, my dear sir,” said Glenville, “for these ample remarks. It would be almost a waste of time to mention any other difficulties. Indeed, sir, the more I read the new testament, the more its seeming discrepancies are removed. I am charmed with the simplicity and heavenly grandeur of its contents. An irresistible conviction that the founders of christianity have not imposed upon the world a cunningly devised fable, but were the inspired ministers of a divine system, often steals over me, and makes its way to the heart in defiance of scepticism.”

“I am glad to hear you make this confession, my dear Howard,” said Mr. Ward. “In fact, if the positive evidences in favour of christianity be

true, these minor difficulties weigh not a feather in the scale against it. If the miracles wrought by our Saviour were real, if only one of them be clearly proved, if the single fact of his resurrection and ascension be credibly attested; the divinity of the gospel must follow as a necessary consequence. It is impossible to suppose that God would raise to life an impostor, or permit a miracle to be wrought in support of falsehood."

"Doubtless," said Glenville, "that must be universally acknowledged; and if I had never doubted the fact of our Saviour's resurrection, the difficulties I have mentioned to you would not have seemed so formidable."

"Certainly," answered Mr. Ward, "if that were doubtful, other difficulties would be increased a thousand fold, and the whole system would rest on slippery ground. The resurrection of Christ is the main pillar of christianity, without which the whole fabric must fall. The spread of the gospel at the beginning, and its existence at the present day, are facts which equally depend on its founder's resurrection and ascension. If christianity were simply a moral system, this fact would lose its importance, and might be suspected without involving consequences so fatal to its stability and design.

But the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed, are the grand theme of christianity, teaching us, as its most peculiar and essential doctrine, that 'he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.' Hence St. Paul seemed willing to rest on this single fact the entire credibility of his doctrine, and the firmness of his faith and hope, when he said to the Corinthians, 'Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? For if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses for God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.'"

"For this reason," replied Glenville, "I have sometimes thought the statements of the four evangelists in reference to our Lord's resurrection, were not so clear and harmonious as the importance of the event required; and that the testimony of other eye-witnesses ought to have been subjoined, to confirm so stupendous a miracle."

"Nor can it be denied, my dear sir," said Mr.

Ward, "that you have some ground for this opinion. We do not pretend that any one of the evangelists has recorded all the evidences of our Saviour's resurrection, or that the whole of their accounts together form a complete and harmonious narrative of the fact. Each historian related those particulars that were most strongly impressed on his own mind, or which best answered the primary design of his narrative, without considering what others might have written, and without regard to the precise order of time and place in which the events had occurred; whence there is some appearance of confusion and inconsistency in their accounts. But if we compare all the particulars in question, duly considering their extreme brevity, and the time and place assignable to each, we shall find these apparent discrepancies so far removed as to evince the credibility and harmony of all the facts mentioned, either as detached events, or in connexion with the whole narrative. Had we lived at the time, and heard the oral accounts delivered by the apostles and their companions, who had the privilege to eat and drink with our Lord after he rose from the dead, I feel confident we should have found the evidences adduced so numerous, their testimony so minute and explicit,

and the consistency of the facts so clear and self-evident, as to preclude all reasonable doubt. When the evangelists, some years after, sat down to write their brief accounts for the benefit of the churches, they were so confident that Christ had been seen alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, and the fact was so firmly believed among them, and so incapable of denial or dispute, that it was not their design to prepare a complete statement of the case, as though they wished to anticipate objections, nor does the necessity or desirableness of such a statement seem to have entered their thoughts. And certainly the absence of every thing like art or contrivance in their accounts, is no impeachment of their veracity."

"That I think, sir, must be conceded, by every candid inquirer," answered Glenville. "On the contrary, a more studied account of the fact, would for the same reason have been far more liable to suspicion. Had their accounts been copied from some forged document which they had agreed to publish, it is rational to suppose, as you before intimated, they would have taken due care to prevent the least appearance of discrepancy and confusion. And if, for the sake of variety, they had chosen different parts of the narrative, every

precaution would have been used to render these detached fragments, when compared together as parts of one general account, so obviously consistent and harmonious as to corroborate each other. From the nature of the accounts themselves, and the difficulties in question, it is evident there could have been no collusion between the four evangelists, and that so far as they deserve credit at all, they must be received as so many separate and independent witnesses of the same fact. This circumstance, I confess, more than counterbalances the difficulty of reconciling some detached portions of the narrative, while it can be shewn that none of them involve an absolute contradiction."

"The propriety and weight of this concession, sir, is unquestionable," replied Mr. Ward. "But we have not only the testimony of the four evangelists, but of all the apostles and their companions in the ministry, together with the whole body of the christian church at Jerusalem. It cannot surely be imagined that the apostles and evangelists fabricated the story of their master's resurrection, as the groundwork of an imposture which they had determined to propagate at the hazard of their lives. To imagine this, would be to form an hypothesis, not only unsupported by a single fact,

but in direct opposition to all the facts and circumstances of the case in question; than which it is scarcely possible for any thing more irrational to be conceived. It is evident from the four gospels, that, whatever confidence the apostles had previously entertained of their Lord's messiahship, and the benefits about to flow from his authority, the circumstances of his death so completely shocked their prejudices and undermined their faith, that they felt themselves utterly abashed and confounded, and were glad to retire from the public eye, like persons ashamed of their expectations, when convicted of supporting some visionary and abortive scheme. And notwithstanding he had frequently intimated the fact, and even explicitly foretold them that he should be put to death, and the third day rise again, they had no expectation of its coming to pass, but with difficulty believed those who first announced the wonderful and interesting news. It was, indeed, so contrary to their pre-conceptions, and involved consequences so remote from every theory they had previously entertained, that, from the constitution of the mind, and the ordinary course of its operations in the admission of new doctrines, nothing but the evidence of their senses could have convinced them of its

truth. No, they were not only unwilling to rely on the testimony of each other, but would not be satisfied even with ocular demonstration, till their risen Saviour had said, 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! Handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.' But if the apostles had been credulous enough to receive it on slight grounds, or to depend on a mere visionary proof of his re-appearance, in which a deficiency of direct evidence might have been supplied by the fervour of imagination; yet they had no motive to invent the story, or to become its abettors. There was nothing in their character and cast of mind, or in their previous habits and connexions, to inspire the thought of an imposture, or to qualify them for its execution, if devised by others. All the motives of avarice, ambition, voluptuousness, novelty, or romance, by which impostors are usually influenced, were wanting to them; and if so wild a project had been once conceived, it must have perished in the attempt by the certain failure and disgrace which threatened its supporters. Nothing but the strongest assurance of its reality could have induced them to bear witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; nor could any thing have produced

that assurance but the clearest and most indubitable proofs. And yet this was the principal point, to which the apostles invited the attention of their countrymen, boldly appealing to the public, in the very centre of the city where they affirmed, the facts themselves had just taken place. Their testimony was open to the closest scrutiny, and their adversaries had all possible means and motives to detect the cheat, if any had been designed. Could the jewish rulers have falsified the apostles' testimony, by producing the body of Jesus, whom they had lately crucified, and over whose sepulchre they had placed a sufficient guard, there can be no doubt the imposture would at once have perished in Jerusalem. But all the efforts of their malice, ingenuity, and power, not being accompanied with the shadow of evidence, failed to invalidate the fact, or check the confidence and zeal of its undaunted messengers. Those very men who had previously been so timid and incredulous, being assured of their Saviour's resurrection and ascension by evidence which it was impossible to doubt, now persisted in their testimony with a firmness and interpredity which no hostility or sufferings could repress. Not one of them ever attempted to save himself by betraying his companions or

disclosing any secret fraud; which has no parallel in the history of known impostures, and which nothing can account for but the irresistible force of truth. Indeed, every convert gained by the apostles in Jerusalem and Judea, may be considered as attesting the credibility of the fact; while the conversion of St. Paul two years afterwards, confirmed it by a new and splendid miracle. Speaking therefore of our Saviour's resurrection, and stating its principal evidences, that great apostle says, 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto the present, but some are fallen asleep; after that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles; and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.'

"I thank you, my dear sir, for so full an illustration of the argument," replied Glenville. "These considerations afford me entire satisfaction, and I now think the testimony of the evangelists and apostles entitled to the fullest credit. But did

it never strike you, sir, as a mysterious circumstance, and a matter of deep regret, that our Lord wrote nothing himself, but left his doctrine to the oral instructions and written memorials of his messengers? Had his doctrine been written out in a systematic form, by himself or under his immediate authority, instead of being recorded and explained by others, the principal of whom had not the advantage of his personal acquaintance and instruction, would it not have prevented many disputes, and exhibited christianity to the world in a more easy and impressive manner?"

"I do not consider such a plan either practicable or desirable," answered Mr. Ward. "If our Saviour's doctrine had been nothing more than a moral system, a rule of conduct in reference to ourselves and God, enforced by divine sanctions, he might certainly have left it in the form you suppose. But the essence of christianity is the manifestation of Christ himself in all his mediatorial relations, as the Lord and Saviour of the world. He is not only the author and finisher of our faith, but its object and support, the centre and glory of the system. It could not, therefore, be committed to writing, nor understood by the apostles themselves, till his death and resurrection

had ratified his messiahship, and developed the peculiarities of his doctrine as an economy of redemption. And though St. Paul, to whose writings we are so eminently indebted for an inspired illustration of the christian faith, had not the advantage of our Lord's oral instruction, yet that deficiency was amply supplied by his miraculous conversion, and the personal communications he received from the Saviour in his exalted state. And thus the manner of his induction to the apostleship, and his supernatural endowments, correspond with the splendour of his talents, and the extent and perpetuity of his usefulness."

"But you are aware, sir," said Glenville, "that some deistical writers have represented the conversion and pretensions of St. Paul as justly liable to suspicion. While they admit and even eulogize his talents, as a man of the most splendid genius, and the most captivating eloquence, they speak of him as a crafty impostor, who espoused christianity from motives of ambition, and by engrafting upon it the inventions of his own fervid imagination, impressed it with the mysteriousness of a divine system, and gave it that peculiar form under which it is now generally received."

"There is nothing too monstrous and incredible,

sir," answered Mr. Ward, "for writers of that school to invent and propagate, if they fancy it will injure the christian cause, or give the least support to their pernicious errors. But if you could rake together all the absurd inventions of scepticism and imposture, from the earliest ages, and the most distant climes, you would not find one more monstrous and incredible, more remote from probability and fact, than this. It seems to me to refute itself by its own absurdity. And if the sceptic himself would only read the history of St. Paul's labours, or calmly peruse any one of his epistles, I think he would feel himself compelled to pronounce the supposition you have named, untenable and preposterous. I can hardly believe that any man, making the least pretensions to common sense and common honesty in his inquiries after truth, could for a moment entertain such a notion, much less employ the sophistry of perverted talent in recommending it. If Saul of Tarsus had forfeited the favour of his patrons, and the prospect of worldly honour, when he commenced his journey to Damascus; or if christianity had been espoused by the great, and in the meridian of its prosperity, at the time of his conversion; the possibility of ambitious motives might have been urged

in favour of this suspicion. But when the christian cause appeared on the eve of perishing, while his previous habits and connexions, with the prospect of secular preferment, combined to strengthen his unbelief, an entire change took place in his views and character, and he began to preach the faith he had before laboured to destroy ; though in doing so, he not only renounced his former prejudices and passions, but suffered the loss of all things, and exposed himself to the unrelenting violence of his former patrons and friends. No adequate reason for his conduct can be assigned, but the one assigned by himself, and verified by the whole of his apostolic labours. He was, indeed, raised up by a special providence, to supply an important vacancy in the apostolic mission, and to become by his ministry and writings, one of the greatest benefactors of the world."

"But I suppose, sir," replied Glenville, "you will admit that what are called the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, on points most frequently controverted, are chiefly derived from the writings of this apostle. Even St. Peter seems to acknowledge as much, when, speaking of Paul's epistles, he says, 'they contain many things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as

they do also the other scriptures, to their own delusion.' And I have frequently heard it observed, that the aspect of christianity, as it appears in the discourses of our Lord, and in the writings of St. Paul, is altogether so dissimilar, that if the latter be correct, the former must be so meagre and defective as scarcely to deserve the name. But Christ surely was the best expounder of his own doctrine. And as many years elapsed before St. Paul's writings were published, while thousands must have lived and died in the faith without seeing them, I cannot imagine how any doctrine can be deemed essential, unless it were clearly taught by our Saviour, and recorded in the four gospels."

"Why, from the nature of the case," replied Mr. Ward, "we must regard the apostles as the authorized interpreters of our Saviour's doctrine. Clearly as it was taught by himself, and beautiful and instructive as his sayings and discourses are, it was obviously impossible for some things to be fully understood, till after his resurrection and ascension had explained them. His apostles were therefore commissioned and qualified, not merely to relate and record the oral instructions of their divine master, but also to ratify and illustrate the entire system of his doctrines and institutions.

Nor can any man be said to receive christianity at all, unless he acknowledge the authority of its apostles. But though we are greatly indebted to the writings of St. Paul, which comprize so large a portion of the new testament, and so fully elucidate its doctrinal peculiarities, yet I cannot admit that there is the least discrepancy between them. And with respect to the person of Christ, which has occasioned so many controversies, and the greatest possible diversity of opinion, you are aware that the greatest number of disputed texts are found in the writings of the apostle John. But, in fact, these and all other doctrines confessedly fundamental, may be found in St. Matthew's gospel, stated with more or less frequency and explicitness, in the language of our Lord himself. The idea of imputing to St. Paul a different doctrine, superadded to the christianity of the four evangelists and original apostles, is altogether unfounded and fallacious. And I more than suspect that no person who questions his integrity, or dislikes his doctrine, will retain any cordial respect for the rest of the new testament."

"To these arguments, my dear sir," answered Glenville, "I have nothing further to object. Indeed, my calm and deliberate judgment has

already come to a conclusion which affords me abundant satisfaction, although former doubts frequently arise. I feel by painful experience, that false opinions and wrong feelings, like the vibrations of an instrument, will long linger in the mind, even in defiance of one's better judgment. But though the mysteries of the gospel sometimes stagger my belief, time and attention to the scriptures will, I trust, with the divine blessing, insure permanent repose."

"I have no doubt of it," replied Mr. Ward; "and the more this is the case, the more happy will you find yourself. As to those parts of the gospel which seem most mysterious, I wonder any well-informed person should consider them on that account incredible. Of the mode of the divine existence, though often made the subject of rude unhallowed controversy, we know absolutely nothing, but what it has pleased God to reveal. And with respect to the constitution of our Saviour's person as the Son of God incarnate; the design and efficacy of his death as a sacrifice for our redemption; the works ascribed to him in his mediatorial agency from the beginning to the consummation of all things; the influence of the holy Spirit in the renovation of our nature; the resurrection of the

dead, and other mysterious doctrines ; they are as much entitled to our faith, and as easy to be understood by our reason, as the fact of an immediate revelation from the mind of God, or of any miracle wrought to confirm it. All objections made against these doctrines on the ground of their mysteriousness, like the Athenians ridiculing the resurrection, only betray human ignorance and vanity. Till philosophers have comprehended every thing about them, and have unravelled every mystery in nature and providence, let them be silent respecting the mysteries of grace. We are surrounded with mysteries, sir, and are the greatest mystery ourselves ; while the commonest operations of nature, and the most familiar objects, contain many things which philosophy herself is compelled to leave, as she finds them, unknown and inexplicable. Let us then, my dear friend, confine reason within her own province ; and we shall perceive in christianity nothing that can be called irrational. Let us yield to evidence, wherever it may lead us ; and we shall find in the gospel a sure resting place for the soul. Let us pursue our inquiries with humility and firmness, seeking the assistance of the divine Spirit, and resigning ourselves to its holy influence. And then, as Lord

Bacon observes, we shall feel it is heaven upon earth to live in charity, trust in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth."

"I most cordially acquiesce in these sentiments," said Glenville. "The human mind, with all its capabilities and most splendid attainments, is daily exhibiting too many proofs of fallibility and weakness, to become the standard of divine truth or moral rectitude. It would be absurd and presumptuous to reject christianity, simply because some of its facts or doctrines may perplex our reason, and exceed its narrow and feeble grasp. The mysteriousness of the gospel is the necessary consequence of its truth, resulting from the spirituality of its nature, the divinity of its origin, and the ineffable grandeur of its process and design. The grace and condescension it ascribes to the Deity, as displayed in the economy of redemption, in contrast with the guilt and insignificance of its objects, invest it with peculiar interest and glory, and fill the mind with feelings of mingled astonishment and delight. And yet, sir, there are moments when this circumstance itself seems too wonderful to be true!"

"It is, indeed, an overpowering thought," said Mr. Ward. "Even the psalmist felt the same, when he considered the glory of God as manifest

in the heavens, in contrast with human weakness. And certainly, it is not strange, if the wonders of redemption excite still greater astonishment. But let us not imagine the agency unfolded in the gospel, and the apparatus employed for its success, are too magnificent for the end to be achieved. Insignificant as we are by nature, the superior state for which we are destined, and the happiness flowing for ever from our redemption, dignify our existence, and render the means of our redemption infinitely important. If, therefore, we consider the gospel in its connexion with the moral government of God, the manifestation of his character, the influence it may have on other worlds, and the glory to which it will raise myriads of happy spirits for ever, we shall see, that while its aspect is so auspicious to ourselves, it equally redounds to the glory of God, and will diffuse the honour of his name through the ages of eternity; 'that now,' as St. Paul observes, 'unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.'"

"My dear sir," answered Glenville, "I give you a thousand thanks for your kind sympathy and assistance. I shall long remember this interview, and trust my future life will evince more forcibly

than words can, the regard I feel for your friendship, and the benefits I have derived from your instructions."

"Nothing, my dear Howard," said he, "could give me purer satisfaction than to be the instrument of your present and future happiness. I rejoice in your recovery from the trackless and dreary waste of scepticism to the faith and hope of the gospel; and I anticipate its pleasing consequences to yourself, your family, and the world. Your best friends share with me in these sentiments, which, I am confident, time and experience will justify. When you return to Town, let me hear from you frequently; and be assured of my fervent prayers for your future preservation and happiness."

CHAP. XVI.

FOR some weeks Glenville pursued his inquiries with the utmost seriousness and candour, in the true spirit of christian humility and prayer; and by frequent conversations with his more intelligent friends, and a free discussion of the most interesting questions, rendered his social interviews the means of rectifying his judgment, and acquiring sacred knowledge. By this process, he was gradually relieved from former perplexities, and arrived at those views of the gospel which not only convinced and satisfied his reason, but gave peace to his conscience, interested and controlled his affections, established his piety on firmer ground, and prepared him to encounter future difficulties with unshaken resolution and success. Having thus, with equal pleasure and advantage, spent several months at home, or in the circle of

his connexions, the time arrived for him to return to the metropolis, and resume his professional studies.

Having once more bid adieu to his family and friends, he could not help looking back with painful emotions, on the scenes which had past before him, and the change which had taken place in his own mind, since his first departure from the native endearments of home. As he pursued his journey, and beheld the same places and the same scenery, which he had then witnessed for the first time, the sight brought afresh to his mind many affecting associations, and he was glad to proceed in silence, interrupted only by an involuntary sigh, or an affected cough, concealing the gushing tear. Giving full scope to his imagination, and recalling the facts which memory had imprinted on its faithful pages, he would gladly have exchanged the presence of his silent and unobtrusive companions for some solitary retreat, where his feelings might be indulged without restraint. And while the recollection of many past events could not fail to agitate his bosom, and excite emotions of the keenest regret, it also awakened many forebodings of the future, and a more humbling distrust in his own powers. Under these reflections, the taciturnity

of his fellow travellers was not displeasing to him ; nor did he for some time feel disposed to disturb the silence, or ascertain the extent of their information and cast of mind, by introducing any of the common-place remarks usually made in such cases.

At the same time, he had determined to seize every opportunity of improving the journey, by turning any incident that might occur, to some valuable purpose, or by directing the conversation of his companions to some interesting and useful topic. Having, therefore, at last sufficiently indulged his own reveries, and several fresh passengers having entered the coach, who at once appeared more loquacious, if not more intelligent than the former company, he had no difficulty in realizing his designs, but soon commenced a conversation which he long remembered with pleasure.

Mr. Colton, one of the passengers alluded to, was a gentleman of pleasing manners, and considerable conversational abilities. With respect to general literature, and the state of things in the political and fashionable world, he appeared to be well-informed, and often expressed himself with fluency and precision. But in regard to religion, he seemed to have no fixed or definite sentiments whatever. And while many of his remarks proved

that he was sceptically inclined, and averse to every thing like serious and decided piety, his manner of expressing himself indicated that vagueness of opinion, and total want of christian knowledge, which are uniformly coupled with religious indifference, and frequently betrayed by persons otherwise sensible and well-informed.

Mr. Boswell, another of the party, who took a principal share in the conversation, though less polished in his address than Mr. Colton, and less familiar with fashionable life, seemed to be more intelligent, liberal, and communicative. His appearance, at first sight, was naturally prepossessing. The expression of his countenance, no less than his language and tone of voice, indicated a most generous spirit, and a disposition to scan the faults of society with a candid eye and the feelings of a philanthropist. His manners were remarkably kind and affable; and if he sometimes appeared too ingenuous and unreserved for the prudent calculations and cold civilities of formal society, his unaffected benevolence and good sense could scarcely fail to repress the frown of the censorious, and win the esteem and confidence of generous and enlightened minds. From his conversation, he was evidently well-acquainted with the state of

religious parties in the metropolis, and, as Glenville afterwards ascertained, took an active part in many of its benevolent institutions; while his private and public character, upon further intimacy, fully justified the prepossessions at first entertained in his favour.

The common-place remarks suggested by local events, passing objects, the state of the weather, and other topics of colloquial discourse, being as usual exhausted by the company, their conversation naturally turned to subjects of greater interest, including questions of national policy, and the merits and delinquencies of great men. Having discussed these points with all the gravity and wisdom of stage-coach politicians, and, as a matter of course, settled the affairs of the nation on the surest basis, religion was introduced to their attention, and a variety of observations elicited, which gratified the subject of this memoir, and confirmed his views. The state of religion in the metropolis, and the prevalence of deistical opinions, being alluded to, the jealousies and dissensions of the religious world were severely censured; certain preachers of distinguished popularity were mentioned, and their comparative merits and defects canvassed with much freedom; the peculiar modes and opinions

of different sects were also described, and their foibles exposed with more boldness and severity than sound discrimination or christian candour.

After listening to the conversation for some time without taking any part in the discussion, "I must confess, gentlemen," said Mr. Colton, "your debates on this interminable subject have been very amusing. They remind me of the old proverb, When doctors disagree, who shall decide? There need not surely be such an outcry made against the abettors of infidelity, as it is called; nor such an array of forces, from the anathemas of bigots and the enactments of the legislature, to the attorney-general's ex-officio and the jailer's power, to crush their well-meant endeavours to relieve the world from these miserable dissensions by recommending the religion of nature and common sense!"

"You cannot feel greater repugnance, sir, than I do," answered Glenville, "to the enforcement of penal laws on the score of heresy and schism. Liberty of conscience, as Lord Mansfield very properly observed, is every man's birth right. Nothing, therefore, can be more unreasonable, more unjust, more impolitic, than persecution."

"That is a sentiment, sir," interrupted Mr. Boswell, "which does great honour to his Lord-

ship's memory. Had it been always acknowledged and acted upon by christian judges and christian legislators, it would have prevented infinite mischief, and relieved the christian name from unmerited obloquy. If liberty to think for ourselves, and to acquaint others with the result of our inquiries, be one of the first and most inalienable rights of our nature, a right equally possessed by the many and the few, the governor and the governed ; and if the sober use of that right be essential to integrity of conscience, and a manly independence of character ; diversity of sentiment, entertained and professed without restraint, is the natural and necessary consequence. Unless all mankind could have their minds cast in the same intellectual mould, and their education conducted by exactly the same process, it is manifestly impossible for uniformity of opinion to exist. I can imagine only two ways by which even the semblance of religious uniformity can be produced ; namely, either by reducing mankind to such a state of profound ignorance and mental prostration, as shall paralyze all their faculties, and preclude the exercise of thought ; or by divesting them of mental liberty, and subjecting their opinions to such an invariable and rigorous control, as shall suppress

all excursions of genius, and extinguish the first symptoms of heresy and schism. But as both these are revolting to common sense and common humanity, I conceive it is our obvious and straight forward duty, to allow others the same liberty we use ourselves, leaving truth and error, amidst the collision of different sentiments, to stand upon their own ground, as supported or opposed by the ingenuity of their advocates."

"But I presume, sir," answered Mr. Colton, "you will reserve an exception to these general principles, in favour of the religion as by law established. You are aware, that if our lawyers admit the abstract right of all men to judge for themselves, they contend this right must not be used against the religion of our country, except under certain powerful restrictions. Christianity being, as they say, part and parcel of the law of the land, an integral part of the constitution, no person can be allowed with impunity to deny its authority or ridicule its sacred rites. For the sake of keeping up the sanctions of religion, and the decencies of morality, it is just and necessary, they say, to prevent or put down the advocates of deism by wholesome restraints and temperate punishments. And I believe it is the opinion of

tates the circulation of their opinions, but by exciting public curiosity and public sympathy in their behalf, it induces many to think more favourably of their pretensions, and to receive their notions with more avidity and respect. Several individuals of this class who have made the most noise, would scarcely have been heard of beyond the small sphere of their personal acquaintance, had it not been for the impolicy of their prosecutors. And if their eccentricity, like the appearance of a comet, had for a time excited some attention, it would in like manner have led to greater knowledge of the christian system, and a stronger faith in its excellence and divine origin. Were such men always left alone, they would soon sink into oblivion, through the feebleness of their talents, or the manifest absurdity of their opinions. And if a few inexperienced persons of an unstable and speculative turn of mind, should be drawn into error by their fallacious reasonings, the injury thence arising, would be infinitely counterbalanced by the renewed efforts and more extensive usefulness of wise and good men. At least, gentlemen, such is my opinion."

"And I have no doubt, sir," added Glenville, "that opinion is perfectly correct. Christianity,

as a divine system, neither needs nor requires the use of carnal weapons in its defence; nor can it be promoted or honoured by the penalties inflicted on its mistaken opponents, whatever may be the cause or complexion of their unbelief. It originated, and made its way through the world, not only without the patronage of the great, but in direct opposition to all the constituted authorities of imperial Rome; and will continue to diffuse its influence over those countries where it has neither wealth nor power to enforce or recommend its claims. Whatever advantages the state may think proper to confer on its ministers, as in this country the advantages enjoyed by the clergy are very great; it must not be imagined that religion itself depends on these advantages, or owes its influence over the public mind to their continuance. Much less can we suppose that its stability depends on the suppression of deistical writings, or the imprisonment of some two or three individuals in an age, who step forward and acquire transient notoriety, as the apostles of unbelief. To admit a supposition of this sort would be to impeach the credibility of the gospel; and to place it on a level with those acknowledged impostures which owe their perpetuity to despotic power. But believing christianity to

nature of a thing is not altered by men's opinions about it. Silver and gold, jewels and diamonds, are valuable, although many know not the qualities which make them so. Though many neglect, and others are ignorant of their own true interest, it is nevertheless a fit object of pursuit. The christian religion is either true or false, independently of what we may think respecting it. If true, its importance must be infinite. It is worthy of every man's inquiry for his own satisfaction, whether his neighbours attend to it or not. And doubtless, sir, you will not think truth and virtue less lovely, or less worthy of our esteem, because some have dressed them up in grotesque, and others in meretricious ornaments."

"Certainly, sir," said Mr. Colton; "I would always venerate and embrace truth, under every attire. But, amidst the contention and uncertainty of different sects, though we ask, with Pilate, 'What is truth?' we are still left without an answer."

"I do not see the propriety of your argument, sir," answered Mr. Boswell. "If diversity of opinion be a valid objection against christianity, it would be equally valid against every thing worth living for. Is not health, sir, very desirable?"

And yet, men differ in opinion as to the best means of its enjoyment and preservation. What, sir, can be more valuable than liberty, civil and religious, secured by good laws and a wise government? And yet how discordant are men's opinions on these points! All who make any pretensions to knowledge themselves, admit the importance of a liberal education, notwithstanding the abuses to which talent and learning are frequently applied. We should look at religion for ourselves then, and not be influenced by vain speculations. As the existence and harmony of the solar system is a fact, though astronomers are divided in their ideas of its magnitude, and the cause of its operations; so I believe christianity to be divine, notwithstanding the clashing opinions of the christian world."

"Your reasoning, sir, I must confess, is very ingenious," said Mr. Colton. "And if it were possible to make up one's mind, it would be very proper to begin the inquiry. But I don't see how these perplexing dissensions can be avoided, unless we go back to Rome, and find in the papal infallibility, a prompt solution of all such difficulties."

"In point of uniformity, sir," answered Glenville, "the Romanists have certainly the advantage. But those among them who really exercise their

thoughts, fall into the same diversity of opinion as ourselves, although their connexion with the Romish church prevents its appearance. Hence it is a favourite maxim with them, 'that their opinions are various, but their faith one.' But all consistent protestants may adopt this maxim with much greater propriety, and in terms infinitely more explicit and catholical. The faith of the Romanists, in which all agree, is the most indefinite and untangible of fictions, and was most literally expressed by the Irishman, who said, 'I believe what the church believes, and the church believes what I believe.' But the different sects of protestants, amidst all their variations, can appeal to the scriptures as the *one faith* received by them all, in which there is no incongruity."

"I confess, sir," replied Mr. Colton, "I would rather err with those who think and judge for themselves what is truth, than dream away my existence in the unthinking stupor and mental prostration of an ignorant credulity. Nor should I think the existence of these different sects furnished an objection to christianity, were it not for their mutual animosities, and the propensity of all to anathematize persons who disbelieve or doubt their peculiar notions."

"You cannot regret or censure such animosities more than I do," said Glenville. "But we have no right to blame christianity for the failings of its friends, unless they were produced or sanctioned by it. What, however, is the distinguishing virtue of a christian, but a spirit of enlightened and universal charity? 'Now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.'"

"If the preachers of christianity would recommend that virtue, sir," answered Mr. Colton, "some good might be expected. But I suspect most of them prefer dogmatizing about faith, till they and their hearers lose sight of charity."

"Pardon me, sir," interrupted Mr. Boswell, "but I think your censure is neither just nor charitable. I suspect you are influenced rather by prejudice than fact, and should be sorry to find you have any just ground for this harsh opinion of the clergy. They have doubtless their failings like other men; but we must certainly give many of them credit for integrity and benevolence."

"But I presume, sir," answered Mr. Colton, "you will not deny the existence of such animosities in the religious world. Is it not a well-known fact, that churchmen in general hate the sectaries,

and the sectaries in return, not only hate the church, but envy and revile one another? It is scarcely possible to hear a sermon, or take up a magazine in the interest of a particular party, which I have sometimes had the curiosity to do, without finding something of this kind introduced. When they allude to each other, it is amusing to see how the virtues common to all, and their efforts to do good, are thrown into the shade, while their peculiar errors and failings are exaggerated. One questions the common sense and common integrity of his opponents; and another doubts the possibility of their salvation. And I have heard it remarked by literary men, who must be reckoned good judges, that the leading periodicals, both in the church and out of it, are so crammed with sectarian jealousies, and an incessant repetition of the points peculiar to themselves, as to become absolutely nauseating to all but their own party. On a Sunday morning, some months ago, I left home about service time, to spend the day in hearing various preachers of different sects, with a view to judge for myself of their respective merits. But, really, sir, their exhibitions of the gospel were so dissimilar, and yet delivered with so much positivity, as though they thought our salvation

depended on swallowing all their nostrums; that, to confess the truth, I returned home in the evening, more than ever disgusted with the religious world."

"You seem to have been very unfortunate, sir," rejoined Mr. Boswell, "in the preachers selected for your experiment. I cannot help thinking, a more intimate knowledge of the London clergy, both in the establishment and out of it, would have left a different impression, and induced you to think more favourably of the christian doctrine in general, and of the talents and unanimity of its advocates. No doubt their preaching is attended with some shades of difference, partly resulting from diversity of genius and education, and partly from the influence of human systems in modifying the same doctrine. But the points of difference are, for the most part, unimportant, when compared with those essential truths of the common salvation, in which they all agree, and to the promotion of which their ministerial labours are devoted."

"But if that be the case," answered Mr. Colton, "it only renders their animosities more strange and inexcusable. Were they supporting so many hostile religions, each of which could flourish only by the destruction of its rivals, their mutual jealousy

and hatred would be sufficiently natural. But if, as you say, they all believe and promote a common salvation, while the points of difference are merely circumstantial, it is very surprizing the latter should have more influence than the former, so as to give them the appearance of hostile factions engaged in malignant combat, rather than so many divisions of the same army, contending together for the same common cause. Perhaps some apology may be made for these jealousies on the part of the clergy, from a feeling common to all privileged bodies and particular professions, when their order is attacked, or their monopolies endangered; since the rise and prosperity of different sects supporting their own ministers, must of course invade their province, and diminish their clerical authority, and, if carried to any great extent, might seem to endanger their revenues. But that similar animosities should be indulged by the laity, who can have no such interest at stake, appears to me a species of infatuation which I cannot account for; and yet nothing, sir, is more common."

"I suspect, sir," replied Mr. Boswell, "your apology for the clergy would not be accepted with a good grace. Candour requires us to hope and believe that very few, if any, can be influenced by

considerations so mercenary. The sacred cause in which they are engaged, and a just sense of its infinite responsibility, must no doubt raise them above the operation of such motives. But whether that be the case or not, there can be no just cause for alarm, as to the safety of their revenues. For though it is barely possible that the legislature, in some future exigence of the state, might appropriate the immense resources of the church to the public creditor, there is not the remotest danger to be expected from the rivalry of different sects. And then, as to the real prosperity of the church, and the efficiency of its ministers, it is obvious to every well-informed person, that the exertions of the methodists and dissenters, have had a most favourable influence."

"That seems probable enough," rejoined Mr. Colton. "As the competition of rival talents is found to be extensively beneficial in all other departments of society, constantly producing new efforts of genius and a variety of improvements, it is rational to suppose something of the kind will be felt in the church. But for this reason their mutual hatred is the more astonishing."

"It is indeed truly astonishing," said Glenville, "that christians of different denominations, who

receive the new testament as their common standard of belief, and prove the sincerity of their faith by a pious and honourable deportment, should suspend the offices of christian charity, or entertain a doubt of each other's salvation, merely because they differ in the explanation of certain obscure points, or their mode of conducting the rituals of divine worship. It is too evident, that all parties are deficient in moderation and candour, often treating one another as though they considered all men fallible and imperfect but themselves. The points wherein they differ, though for the most part of subordinate importance, engross too much attention, and are elevated to the rank of essential and fundamental truths, without which they assume the impossibility of salvation. But the great principles respecting which nearly all parties are agreed, are kept on the back ground, and estimated at a low value, in comparison with the doubtful peculiarities by which the different sects are distinguished. If, indeed, it could be proved that one set of opinions on controverted points proceeds from the secret influence of depraved passions, and at the same time strengthens that depravity; or that opposite views of the same subject spring from rectitude of mind, and tend to

establish that rectitude; there would be some plea for the immense stress laid upon them, and the harsh and uncharitable tone of their advocates. But it appears to me, gentlemen, sufficiently obvious, that different views of the same topic are frequently entertained by persons equally eminent for the christian virtues, and even by the same individuals themselves at different periods of life, without producing a favourable or unfavourable effect on their moral and religious character. And it is likewise certain, that some of all persuasions have neither piety nor benevolence to recommend their belief; which proves that moral goodness and personal religion, instead of depending upon sectarian peculiarities, flow rather from the influence of those great principles which are common to all; and by virtue of which many of all denominations have attained a high degree of moral excellence. It is certainly the duty of all men to inquire after truth for themselves, and to embrace it when found. And the result of our inquiries will very much depend on the dispositions cherished in pursuing them; which, of course, renders that result, blamable or praiseworthy. But it is the height of presumption and impiety, to impute the opinions of other men to bad motives or a depraved

heart, when nothing is more difficult than to form a right judgment of our own motives. And to suppose that our final salvation will depend on the mere differences of opinion which prevail among christian sects, is to subvert all the principles of morality and goodness, and to sink the character of the supreme Judge, below that of the most fallible and partial of human judges. It is, therefore, high time that christians had learnt to exercise a more candid spirit, and that the divisions of the church were healed by the gentle hand of christian moderation and charity."

"I fully acquiesce in these sentiments, sir," added Mr. Boswell. "Indeed, it has always appeared to me most unreasonable to take offence at others, because in matters of religion they do not think exactly like ourselves, or use the same forms of worship; much more to hate and persecute them on account of it. We might just as rationally be offended with them for not choosing the same business, or the same kind of dress, or the same style of living; or the same course of education for their children. For though these are minor distinctions, they are points respecting which we have as much right to dictate to each other, as in matters of religion. And though a good man will

always regret the errors of his neighbours, and be ready to use all proper means for their removal, he will not, on that account, neglect the golden rule, which commands us to do unto others, as we would have others do unto us. But I am happy to think a better feeling is gaining ground in the religious world. The rise of various benevolent institutions, supported by the co-operation of all parties, has greatly softened their asperities, and cherished sentiments of sympathy and candour. Moderate men of all persuasions seem agreed to respect each other's integrity, and not to allow minor differences to become a wall of separation, or a source of angry and uncharitable contention. And I hope the time is not far distant, when christian churches will recommend the gospel as much by their unanimity and kindness, as by their activity and zeal."

"That is a consummation devoutly to be wished," said Mr. Colton. "I therefore regard it as one of the best features in our excellent constitution, that it secures to all parties, however distinguished, the peaceable exercise of their own rites. And I think it would evince the wisdom of government, and greatly advance the public weal, if all remaining restrictions and penalties on the score of religion were repealed, so as to give all

loyal subjects, whatever might be their religious scruples, an equal right to the same civil immunities and honours. But when you just said, that the prosperity of the church was rather promoted, than otherwise, by the rival influence of those who withdraw from her communion, you did not surely mean to insinuate that the talents and virtues of the separatists were superior to those of our venerable establishment ! You are of course aware that no person can take orders in the church without a university education ; which, in point of learning and talent, must give her ministers an immense advantage over the illiterate and irregular ministers of other persuasions. For I have always understood that the methodists and dissenters are, for the most part, a set of ignorant fanatics, who select their preachers from the lowest orders of society, without competent learning or abilities."

" Pardon me, sir," said Mr. Boswell, " but I must beg leave to say that you seem to have been egregiously misinformed on this point. That there are individuals in every communion chargeable with fanaticism, it would be folly to deny ; but, as to the general body of the dissenters, the charge is perfectly unfounded. I admit, their ministers are excluded from the two principal universities, and

in the higher departments of literature and science, cannot pretend to rival the established clergy. But they have colleges among themselves, supported by endowments and voluntary contributions, where candidates for the sacred office make considerable proficiency in classical learning and general science, while in the study of theology, and the cultivation of talents peculiar to the christian ministry, their advantages are not exceeded at either of the universities. While then it must be admitted, that the clergy of the establishment excel those of the dissenters in literary and scientific accomplishments, yet, as sound theologians and instructive preachers, I have heard many competent judges remark, that the palm of superiority must be conceded to the latter. In the smaller dissenting churches, composed chiefly of the poor and uneducated, it cannot be denied that too much facility is given to the intrusion of illiterate and incompetent preachers. But even in these cases, as decided piety and good moral conduct are considered indispensable recommendations, the evils thence arising, are transient, and of trivial consequence, when compared with the moral good produced by their well-meant endeavours. And though, gentlemen, I am not a methodist, yet a

long and impartial observation of passing events, compels me to say, that in many parts of the kingdom, incalculable good has been effected by their exertions, which the spread of knowledge, and the increase of liberal sentiments among all parties, will not fail to improve and perpetuate."

"I feel exceedingly gratified with your remarks, sir," added Glenville. "For though I was educated with a view to the church, and my early connexions were all of that persuasion, yet I have long seen the folly of supposing those who dissent from its communion must be bad men. Having felt many doubts and perplexities myself, I have learnt to respect those of others. I wish to entertain a favourable opinion of all, and would rather hear of their merits than their failings. And though I am not without my own predilections, I detest bigotry, and trust I shall never be averse to admire the excellence, or commend the well-meant exertions of all parties."

"In these sentiments, sir, I cordially agree," said Mr. Colton. "And if the clergy would inculcate such a spirit, instead of extolling faith at the expence of charity, my principal objections would be removed, and I should be again disposed to avail myself with more regularity of their instructions."

"Allow me then, sir," rejoined Mr. Boswell, "to recommend you to resume your attendance without delay, when I hope your next experiment will produce a better result. I believe our most enlightened and respectable divines of all denominations, are as anxious to recommend candour and benevolence as faith, and are more concerned that their hearers should become good men, than to gain converts to their own party. I cannot, indeed, vouch for those whom I have not heard; but the minister whom I regularly attend, can never be accused of separating between faith, hope, and charity. In his preaching they are always united."

"That is precisely the preaching I approve," said Glenville, "and I should be happy to hear your minister myself."

"And so should I," added Mr. Colton; "for though my prejudices against the clergy may be strong, I am still open to conviction, and shall be happy to entertain a more favourable opinion."

"It will give me pleasure, gentlemen," said Mr. Boswell, "to accommodate you with a pew next Sunday, if convenient; when, I flatter myself, you will not be displeased with the preacher's doctrine."

Glenville and Mr. Colton accepted the offer, and, according to appointment, accompanied Mr. Bos-

well and family to their usual place of worship. The whole service answered their expectations, and justified the partiality of their friend. In the preacher's style, though intelligible to the humblest capacity, there was nothing to offend the most fastidious. It was orthodox, without bigotry; argumentative, without dogmatism; simple, without vulgarity; and energetic, without violence or excess. It riveted the attention, and impressed the feelings, through the medium of the understanding; and by diffusing the light of truth over the higher faculties, melted the sensibilities, calmed the passions, and kindled the fire of divine love in the soul.

Glenville and his companion thanked Mr. Boswell for the accommodation, and retired from the service deeply impressed with the preacher's doctrine, and determined in future to enjoy the benefit of his instructions. The former renewed his attendance in the evening; and during his stay in the metropolis, found it highly satisfactory and improving.

After resuming his studies, Glenville was anxious to adopt some plan of communicating his views to the members of their late club, with a faint hope of leading them to a more correct way of

thinking. At first, he had some thoughts of resuming their weekly meetings for the free discussion of the subject; but in the absence of his friend, Mortimer, he afterwards deemed it most prudent to relinquish that design. Indeed, he soon found, upon inquiry, that Mortimer's disaster and change of sentiment being circulated among them, the club had been dissolved by mutual consent; and that many of its members having left the metropolis, and others changed their residence, any attempt to reunite them would be impracticable. Having, however, invited those with whom he was more intimate, to spend an evening at his apartments, he gave them an explicit account of his friend's case, and the letters he had since received from him. He then mentioned the doubts awakened in his own mind by various causes, the course of reading and inquiry he had since followed, the change gradually produced in his belief, and his motives for wishing to see them on that occasion, concluding his address to the following effect.

He had now laid before them, without disguise or reserve, the train of subjects which had lately occupied his thoughts, and the conclusion resulting from a course of the most anxious inquiry; which, from respect for himself and them, he wished to

to be divine, and was received as such by many excellent and enlightened men, it certainly demanded the most serious examination. If, therefore, they had gone wrong, and misled others, he hoped their judgments would speedily be rectified; for which purpose he determined to pursue the most proper and necessary inquiries.

CHAP. XVII.

DURING the last term of his legal studies, Glenville seized an opportunity to spend a few days with his friend Mortimer, at his father's in Surrey. The place where Mr. Mortimer resided, was a genteel town of small but increasing population, within a few miles of the metropolis. Here he had lived amidst the esteem and affection of his parishioners nearly thirty years, having been preferred to the vicarage at an early period of his ministry. Impressed from the beginning with a just sense of the local influence and moral responsibility of the sacred office, he had laboured with unwearied diligence for the spiritual interests of his flock. As a parochial minister he was most exemplary. His demeanour was equally remote from the hauteur which chills affection, and the low familiarity which breeds contempt. He was affable and kind to the humblest of his parishioners, and


in which its hours were occupied, both in the family and the church, sorted with his feelings, and brought to his recollection the sabbaths he had spent at home and in the family of Mr. Ward, when his mind was free from care, and his devotion undisturbed by chilling doubts and atheistic speculations. The subjects selected by Mr. Mortimer, were very appropriate, while the train of luminous and convincing argument, the flow of sweet and sacred eloquence, the earnest solicitude and affection with which he proved and enforced his doctrine, bore away all opposition, and applied it to the heart with irresistible interest and conviction. And as Glenville listened to the solemn and impressive tones of the speaker, and joined the congregation in their responses, the spark of devotion glowed into a flame, and he seemed to feel like the prophet when his lips were touched with a live coal from the sacred altar. When the service closed, he had no wish to forget its solemnities as he left the threshold of the church; nor did he, like many, divert his thoughts and his conversation to public news or private scandal, or other topics of light unprofitable discourse. He rather sought retirement in the sequestered walks of the vicarage, where he might indulge the

musings of a devout spirit, review the arguments he had heard, strengthen the impressions of truth, and by the fervent aspirations of secret prayer, obtain the assistance, and commit himself to the care of an all-gracious and omnipresent Deity. And though in the family he could not hesitate to express the sense he entertained of Mr. Mortimer's ministry, he rather wished to converse on the subjects which had been discussed, with a view to elicit truth and acquire information, than to eulogize the preacher.

In the evening, Mr. Mortimer joined the family, and by a variety of well-timed remarks, threw fresh light on the doctrines previously delivered, and kept up an interesting and useful conversation till supper time. And having closed the engagements of the day with a short but impressive service, Glenville and the family retired to their apartments with feelings of mutual pleasure and esteem, heightened and endeared by the influence of religion, and the thoughts of its everlasting enjoyments.

On monday morning, Mr. Mortimer intimated that he was going, as usual, to visit some of his sick parishioners, and, as Charles was particularly engaged, said he should be glad of his friend's company. Glenville accepted the offer with equal


promptitude, and among the various cases of poverty and distress which engaged attention, he was impressed with several as pleasing examples of the power of religion under the most trying exigencies of humanity. The first person they visited, was a poor man in the decline of life, who had laboured under long and severe afflictions, and was fast sinking to the grave. He had always borne the character of an honest and industrious man, as Mr. Mortimer observed, and by his sobriety and good conduct, had gained the respect of all his employers. Having, when a boy, learnt the rudiments of knowledge in the free school, and afterwards lived in several respectable families, besides possessing a natural fond of good common sense, in his conversation and manners he was much superior to many of our peasantry. By unwearied labour and an excellent economy, he had brought up a large family without being indebted to parochial aid. But as his children grew to maturity, and he was hoping to find them the comfort of his old age, he had the affliction to follow them all, one after another, to the grave, except one daughter, who alone survived to attend him under his present infirmities. Having likewise, some years ago, lost his wife, to whom he was tenderly attached, and being obliged to desert from his



usual occupations, and depend upon precarious sources, his condition had of late been remarkably desolate, and it seemed wonderful how such accumulated troubles could be borne. But under all his trials he discovered the most exemplary submission to the divine will. His faith and patience failed him not in the trying hour; but under the severest strokes with which it pleased a mysterious providence to afflict him, his spirit was uniformly serene.

While Glenville was expressing his admiration of the case as an example of christian patience, they came to the house of a respectable and wealthy family, to visit a young man who appeared to be in the last stage of a decline. He had been brought up, as Mr. Mortimer afterwards observed, with great tenderness, and no expense had been spared, to give him a liberal education. But upon leaving school, he soon became unsteady, and fell into loose company and dissipated habits. Finding the restraints of paternal authority irksome, and wishing to give full swing to his passions, he abruptly left home, and went to the metropolis, where, after exhausting his resources, he offered his services to a merchant with whom his family were acquainted, and soon afterwards enlisted in the navy. His friends thinking it useless to pur-

chase his discharge, and hoping a voyage or two might tend to curb his propensities, procured him a commission and a letter of recommendation to his officers. Having left port on a voyage to the Mediterranean, and falling in with the enemy's fleet, the ship was captured, and her crew conducted to the interior of France as prisoners of war. After an interval of some months, his friends were informed of his situation; and finding all attempts to procure his release fruitless, they wrote to him in the most tender and affectionate manner, and sent him a supply of money and clothing, together with a bible and other excellent books. The receipt and perusal of these, with the restraints under which he was placed among foreigners, sensibly affected him, and by degrees led to a change of taste and character, from which his parents indulged the most pleasing hopes. But in the mean time, the vigour of his constitution had been undermined by early intemperance and other causes, the effects of which since his release had been gaining ground, and in defiance of medicine, were accompanied with all the symptoms of constitutional decay, which left only the slightest and most transient hopes of his recovery. When our friends called to see him, he was reclining on a sofa, with the bible and other devotional books



before him, which he had been reading with great interest and composure, and from which, he said, his chief enjoyments were derived, whether he hoped for renewed health, or looked forward to eternity.

They afterwards visited an afflicted widow, whose health had been impaired by a malignant cancer, which she had long thought incurable, and the fatal termination of which appeared to be approaching. But under these circumstances, racked with pain, and faint with debility, in the certain prospect of a speedy change, she bore her affliction with unrepining fortitude. Supported by the promises of God, her mental strength seemed to increase as the malady gained ground, and the burden of suffering became heavier. The placidity with which she spoke of her affliction, and the smile of joy which beamed in her countenance as she referred to its termination, afforded Mr. Mortimer the highest pleasure, and appeared to Glenville perfectly supernatural.

Adverting afterwards to her case, "I consider it altogether," said Mr. Mortimer, "one of the most pleasing instances of the transforming and consoling influence of religion. When I first came to the vicarage, she was reckoned one of the gayest persons in the parish. She had recently married

a gentleman of a congenial disposition, and in affluent circumstances. They were fond of company to excess, and took the lead in all the fashionable amusements and gay parties in the neighbourhood. But some years after, when their family had multiplied, and their resources seemed already too limited, an unexpected reverse took place, which swept away the greater portion of their property. Under these misfortunes, her husband unhappily lost all his fortitude; and from the mortifying contrast in his circumstances, sunk under the pressure of a wounded spirit, proving, as in many other instances, that the sorrow of the world worketh death. His widow was thus left in early life, encompassed with difficulties, with a numerous family, and with scanty means of support. But she bore the trial with becoming resolution. At the first stroke of these misfortunes, she saw the vanity of the world, and became the subject of that 'devout sorrow which worketh repentance unto life, not to be repented of.' In the depth of suffering, she found support, and instead of sinking under trouble, or striving against necessity, she sought a refuge in the sanctuary of God, whom she found to be 'a father of the fatherless, and a friend of the widow.' By the assistance of her relatives she was enabled to give the children an excellent

education, and has had the happiness to see them rise into life, imbued with just sentiments, and with every prospect of competence and respectability. And since the present disease has shewn itself, her spirit has been remarkably serene, and she seems now to be anticipating the hour when she shall mingle with those in the heavenly world, 'who have come out of great tribulation, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"


"I thank you, my dear sir, a thousand times," said Glenville, "for these interesting details. These are, indeed, examples of the power of religion, and the value of its consolations, which I shall long remember. How many unhappy suicides, destitute of christian resignation or christian hopes, have fallen under afflictions far less severe than those we have just seen! Truly, sir, there is no remedy for the moral diseases of our nature, and no antidote for its sorrows or its fears, like those provided in the gospel. Whatever may happen to me in future, I trust I shall never again doubt its sufficiency, or lose the just sense of its power."

In the course of the week, Glenville accompanied his friends to the annual meeting of a bible society in the neighbourhood, in the origin

and management of which Mr. Mortimer had taken a lively interest. In reply to some inquiries on the subject, Mr. Mortimer said he considered the bible society to be one of the noblest institutions of any age or country, from the future operations of which he thought the most auspicious results might be expected.

“But I have understood, sir,” said Glenville, “that most of the dignified, and many of the laborious clergy, are opposed to it; not because they object to a free circulation of the scriptures, but because they consider a coalition of all parties in a cause like this, inconsistent with their clerical engagements, or prejudicial to the church; for which reason they prefer uniting with another society, which, in conjunction with the scriptures, circulates the liturgy and homilies of the church of England. Whether their objections to the bible society be well founded, or whether my information be correct or not, I am unable to determine.”

“Your information, sir,” answered Mr. Mortimer, “is, I regret to say, too correct. But why they should think an association of this nature inconsistent with their clerical duties, or in the degree prejudicial to the church, I am not say. To me, the reverse has always ap-



peared self-evident. As a clergyman of the church of England, I will yield to no man in attachment to its doctrines and rites, or a devout concern for its prosperity. But that is no reason why we should refuse to co-operate with persons of all denominations, in promoting an object in which all are agreed. It has ever been the boast of our English church since the days of her immortal defender Chillingworth, and the ground of her separation from the church of Rome, that the bible alone is the religion of protestants. And I cannot but deem it a reproach to our national establishment, as though its members had renounced the grand principles of protestantism, and were symbolizing with the church of Rome, for the clergy to oppose an institution whose sole object is 'to circulate the scriptures without note or comment.' And it appears to me that no true friends of the church can adopt a more effectual plan of retrieving her reputation as 'the purest reformed church in Christendom,' than by giving to this society their prompt and unqualified support."

"But I presume, sir," said Glenville, "you will admit that by co-operating with dissenters, you will tacitly sanction their dissent, and by facilitating their efforts to proselyte, will, in effect, injure the church."

"No, sir, by no means," answered Mr. Mortimer. "On the contrary, it is my decided opinion, that a friendly co-operation of this kind, will rather tend to reclaim dissenters to the church, than to multiply their proselytes."

"Your opinion, my dear sir," replied Glenville, "appears rather singular; and I confess myself unable to see how it can be sustained. I have hitherto understood that the dissenters of all denominations think the union we are speaking of, decidedly favourable to the dissenting interest."

"That may be the case, as to its immediate influence," answered Mr. Mortimer, "and upon their own principles, whatever may be the consequence, I see not how they could do otherwise than give it their support. But the permanent effect of such an union, as to the comparative interests of dissentism and the church, is another question, which time alone can solve. If, however, we refer to the probable influence of moral causes, I suspect you will not consider my opinion so untenable as you imagine. It is well known, that while some are dissenters from principle, deeming the theory of independence preferable to an episcopal establishment, many others join them in consequence of local disputes with their own clergy, or because the preaching of the methodists and dissenters is

more plain and attractive than ours. While then the clergy have it in their power to remove the two latter causes of dissent, do you not see that the operation of the former depends on a frequent discussion of the points in question, by which the advocates of dissent may gain fresh proselytes; or on the force of hereditary prejudices, by which families cling to the peculiar notions of their ancestors; both which a liberal co-operation, like the bible society, is calculated to neutralize or prevent. It is, therefore, I believe, well known that the dissenters, in general, are far less tenacious of their opinions than at former periods; that the more opulent families, becoming less rigid, and mingling more freely with church families, gradually come over to the church; and that, if we except large towns, where popular preachers will gain the most proselytes, the greatest increase of seceders has taken place in those parishes where the officiating clergy have been least conciliatory to their parishioners, and most averse to the bible society and other benevolent institutions. The liberality of the age, indeed, by making people attach less importance to disputed points and peculiar ceremonies, will naturally induce them rather to acquiesce in the church as by law established, than incur the expence of supporting a system of dis-

sent which they consider unimportant, or of whose merits they have no accurate information. In short, sir, I would venture to predict, that if party distinctions were more completely merged in the candour and co-operation of these societies, and if the grounds of dissent peculiar to different sects, should cease to be kept in view by their own public and private efforts, neither provoked by frequent opposition, nor systematically continued for their own sake, the dissenting interest, so far as it depends on theory, would gradually decline, and in a few generations die a natural death. So far then as this institution may affect either party, I think the dissenter has more to fear than the churchman."

"I confess, sir, your opinion seems more plausible than I imagined," said Glenville, "and perhaps this society, instead of injuring either party in fact, may eventually promote the interest of all, and bring about that union in the christian church, in which doubtful points will yield to essential truths, and dissent and schism be extinguished by mutual love and actual unanimity."

"That is precisely the light in which I have long viewed it," answered Mr. Mortimer, "and one of the motives which induced me to give it my feeble support. I am attached to the bible society,

sir, because it breathes the true spirit of christian benevolence; because it asserts the grand principles of protestantism, which all who separate from the church of Rome should strenuously maintain; because it is a bond of union among all christian denominations, and may become one of the chief means of evangelizing the world. Would we counteract the spread of infidel opinions, or expose the corruptions of popery, or disperse the ignorance of our own population, or cherish among all classes the kind feelings of a christian brotherhood, we cannot adopt means better calculated for the purpose. In these respects, it has already done much good; and as its branches are multiplied, and its operations enlarged at home and abroad, I cannot but anticipate the most auspicious results. Nor do I fear that time, as it verifies or frustrates human hopes, will prove me to have been a deluded visionary, in regarding the rise and progress of this and kindred societies, as forming an epoch in the history of our country and of the christian church, on which future generations will look back with gratitude and joy."

Having arrived at the place of meeting, where they found a large and respectable company assembled, Mr. Mortimer took his seat on the platform, and assisted in the business of the day. It being

the first meeting of the kind at which Glenville had been present, its proceedings had all the interest and force of novelty, and in contrast with his late deistical associations in the metropolis, produced an excitement of generous feeling which he found it difficult to control. He listened with deep interest to the report, which began with a brief detail of the local efforts of the committee, and the eagerness with which the bible had been received in the neighbourhood, interspersed with pleasing examples of its influence; and then proceeded to sketch the measures of the parent society, and the good already effected by its domestic and foreign operations. The speeches afterwards delivered, strengthened the impression. He was particularly charmed with the sweet and captivating eloquence of the clerical secretary, since called to his final reward. And though the speakers exhibited the greatest possible diversity of talent and address, he could not fail to perceive and admire the same enlarged benevolence, the same spirit of christian philanthropy and zeal, animating them all. Whatever distinctions existed in their creeds and connexions, no mean jealousy, no jarring note, disturbed the harmony of their discussions, but all seemed to be one, enrolled under the same banners, and contending for one and the same cause.

While their addresses were received by the meeting at large with marked interest and applause, there were circumstances in the case of Glenville, and his friend Charles Mortimer, which gave them an interest and effect not easily described. When they reflected on the noble objects proposed by the meeting; when they listened to the facts and arguments which proved the intrinsic value of the sacred volume; when they observed the generous and enlightened enthusiasm which animated all parties; when they perceived the sacred pleasure which thrilled through the assembly as the speakers touched the chords of christian sympathy and love; when they turned from these to the efforts they had formerly made to depreciate and scorn the bible; when they remembered what different feelings were excited by their own speeches, and those of their associates; when they compared the present meeting with the nature and design of their free-thinking discussions; it overpowered their spirits, and required the greatest effort to preserve their composure and self-possession till the meeting closed. When the meeting was dissolved, and Mr. Mortimer had taken his young friends by the hand, inquiring how they approved the meeting, and tenderly alluding to their former errors, the

mingled emotions of joy and sorrow, of self-reproach and devout thankfulness, swelled and agitated their bosoms beyond control. Glenville, in the fulness of his heart, losing the power of utterance, left the room, and sought a place of retirement, where the intensity of his feelings was relieved by a flood of tears, and subsided into 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding.' In the review of his mental history he remembered many instances of strong excitement, but none equal to this. It was the triumph of benevolence and faith at the interment of scepticism, chanting a requiem, the vibrations of which, like the master-strokes of a skilful musician, long retained their force, and perpetuated the sacred feeling. Nor can he cease to love the cause which produced it, while memory holds her place, and the chords of sensibility and kindness are susceptible of a right impression.

After joining Mr. Mortimer and his family at the inn, on their return to the vicarage, Glenville was accosted by an old acquaintance of the name of Edgar, who wished for an immediate interview. He was one of those members of their late club, to whom the subject of these memoirs had communicated the particulars of his recent change, and to whose candid acknowledgments we alluded at the

close of the last chapter. Having called at Glenville's apartments, and learnt that he was visiting his friend Mortimer, he had come down by one of the morning coaches, and not finding them at home, had hastened to the present meeting, which, he said, would have more than repaid his journey, had he been disappointed in the pleasure of seeing his old friends. Having thus far heard his apology, they introduced him to Mr. Mortimer, who, with his usual kindness, begged he would accompany his friends to the vicarage, to which he cheerfully agreed.

A long conversation ensued, in which Edgar acquainted Glenville and Mortimer with the principal incidents of his moral history, and the mental distress under which he was then labouring. From the straitened circumstances of his parents, it appeared, he had enjoyed but very slender advantages when a child. But at the age of fourteen, by attending a small place of worship, opened by the Methodists in his native village, he became the subject of strong religious impressions. His seriousness being perceived by some of the society, he was soon taken into class, and treated with the utmost kindness. Having a good memory, and a natural fluency of speech, he was

encouraged to engage in prayer, and to speak at their social meetings. Emboldened by his first attempts, and by the flatteries of his friends, he acquired sufficient assurance, and began to hold forth on public occasions. The precocity of his genius, and the fluency of his address, excited general admiration, and procured him the title of the spiritual Rescius. He was invited to preach among all denominations in the neighbourhood, and from the applause of his misguided admirers, began to think himself an extraordinary character. Crowds followed him wherever he preached, and people of all ranks ventured within the walls of unconsecrated ground, for the sake of hearing this wonder of the religious world.

Edgar, in this stage of his career, was taken under the patronage of a pious and benevolent baronet in the same neighbourhood, who received him into his family, and treated him with the utmost generosity and affection. After a few months, he was sent to one of the dissenting colleges, where, at the expence of his worthy patron, he received the advantages of a classical and theological education. The collision of talent encountered in this seminary soon repressed the vanity excited by premature applause, and convinced him

that the precocious talents which procured admiration while a boy, would fail to secure lasting respect, unless improved by close study and cultivation. He, therefore, applied diligently to his books, and hoped by perseverance, to acquire the solid and permanent reputation of superior abilities.

Having gone through the usual terms at this institution, and being still too young for a stated preacher, he was sent to one of the Scotch Universities, to complete his education. But, released from the restraints and vigilant superintendence of a dissenting college, his better principles gradually declined, and his morals became lax and irregular. He likewise formed an intimacy with several young men of the same college, who had thrown off all pretensions to religion, and by whose influence, and the levity of his own spirit, he was soon drawn into the vortex of infidelity and dissipation. The society by which he was patronized, having received a correct account of his sentiments and conduct, were compelled to withdraw their support, in doing which they kindly advised him to relinquish all ideas of the christian ministry. His former patron, commiserating his condition, while he deplored and condemned his errors, advised him to turn his attention to the medical

profession, and generously promised the funds requisite for that purpose. After studying the usual terms, and receiving his certificates, he came to London, and in a few months engaged himself as a surgeon in a ship of war then sailing to the Indies. Upon his return to port the following year, he quitted the navy, and procured a situation in a surgical establishment in the city, where his apostacy was confirmed, and religion wholly banished from his thoughts. It was in these circumstances he was introduced by a friend to the acquaintance of Mortimer, and received into the club, where he often spoke with fluency and applause. But while that applause gratified his vanity, it served to remind him of his juvenile career, and by instituting a comparison between his present and his former conduct, renewed his early convictions, and awakened frequent misgivings and distressing doubts. When he first heard of Mortimer's recantation, it was so sudden and unexpected, and yet took place under circumstances which precluded a suspicion of any sinister design, that it quite staggered and alarmed him. The candid declarations of his friend Glenville, likewise, at their last interview, had revived and strengthened the impression; and from that time

his mind had been harrassed by the most distressing thoughts and mortifying reproaches. His apostasy from religion, after the sense he had felt of its importance in early life, and the profession to which he had devoted his time and talents, now appeared infinitely atrocious, and seemed to include that hopeless state of moral obduracy and guilt which our Lord pronounced unpardonable. But he now disclaimed and abandoned infidelity for ever, with all the unhallowed pleasures and frivolous pursuits to which the last few years of his life had been sacrificed. And whether his were a case within the confines of mercy or not, he felt the strongest assurance that christianity was a divine system, the only substantial ground of hope, the only safe guide to wisdom and happiness. And with this conviction, he hoped his future life would attest his confessions, and evince the sincerity of his repentance.

Glenville and Mortimer thanked him for his narrative, and made such remarks as the facts themselves naturally suggested. They encouraged his hopes, and urged him to persevere in the resolutions he had formed, by an appeal to their own experience, and the happiness it would not fail to impart. The interview was reciprocally pleasing;

and when he took his leave in the evening, with tears of affection and with mutual congratulations, they felt the liveliest gratitude on his account, and offered the most fervent prayers for his steadiness and prosperity. In consequence of Glenville's removal from town, with other causes, but little correspondence took place between them afterwards, and he had no means of learning any further particulars of Edgar's history, except that he had taken orders, and was officiating acceptably in London.

CHAP. XVIII.

WHILE Glenville enjoyed much pleasure in the society of Mr. Mortimer and his family, and the circle to which he was introduced in the neighbourhood, it may naturally be supposed that our two friends in particular, often conversed over past events, and reviewed with lively interest the history of their acquaintance. Many affecting incidents were brought afresh to remembrance, which, at once heightened their friendship, and confirmed the principles they had recently embraced. From the past they naturally turned to the future, and began to form the plans, or conjecture the incidents, of their future lives. Many probabilities were suggested, and many tender scenes rose and vanished in the mind's eye. And as fancy drew the picture in lively colours, the memory of past disappointment obscured their lustre with its gloomy shades.

Having talked together on these topics for some hours one evening, Glenville became more pensive than usual, and retired to his chamber considerably depressed. He thought of one whose image was still dear to him, whose name often faltered upon his lips, whom he could once address with confidence as his own, and in whose affection he enjoyed the purest happiness. But now that happiness was gone. The bonds of love had been torn asunder, and his attempts to renew them had failed. Then he thought of home, and the dear objects of his filial and brotherly attachment; while the frequent indisposition of his beloved mother and other branches of the family, of which some recent letters had informed him, alarmed his fears, and excited a train of the tenderest and most painful meditations. Having fallen asleep under these impressions, his imagination pursued the same train, and formed pictures of the future, which persons less credulous might have deemed supernatural. He dreamt that he had been spending the day with his friend Mortimer, at a romantic village in the neighbourhood, and was returning to the vicarage, about ten o'clock in the evening. Twilight was just disappearing as they left the village; and the softness of the air, combined with the fragrance and beauty of nature, rendered the

walk calm and delightful. The road they had taken, led them through a deep and gloomy ravine between two rocks, whose lofty summits, rising in a form rugged and perpendicular, seemed to touch the stars. A profound silence reigned around them, and produced reflections favourable to a romantic and tender sympathy. As they pursued their path, admiring the grandeur of the divine works, Glenville saw on his right hand a recess in the rock, which seemed to be the entrance of a large cave. Struck with its appearance, and wishing to gratify his curiosity, he turned aside with a view to penetrate the interior; when his friend Mortimer, from prudential motives, took him by the hand, and forced him from a retreat which appeared no less dangerous than gloomy. After advancing fifteen or twenty paces from the cave, Glenville looked back, as though it were by enchantment, to glance once more at the interesting spot which he had quitted with reluctance; when, to his great astonishment, he beheld a female beautifully attired, standing at the cave's mouth, with her eyes fixed upon him in calm and earnest solicitude. In a moment he recognized the features of his sister Emily, and from the overpowering influence of the vision, fainted away in the arms of

Mortimer. But in a few minutes recovering his self-possession, he directed his anxious eyes to the angelic countenance of Emily, when she looked again with a placid smile, turned away toward the cave, and instantly vanished.

With feelings powerfully agitated, Glenville and his companion pursued their walk in silent meditation, and soon reached the end of the gloomy chasm. The stars now shone with great brilliance, and the delightful serenity of nature in some degree soothed their spirits. They soon arrived at the vicarage, and were kindly welcomed by the family, who had been waiting for them with some anxiety for the last hour. Perceiving less vivacity than usual, and some marks of perturbation in their countenances, Mr. Mortimer inquired whether any thing unpleasant had happened to them. In reply to this inquiry, Glenville described the road they had come, and the mysterious appearance of his sister Emily at the cave's mouth. While he was relating this circumstance, a violent and unusual knocking was heard at the front door, and then at the room door where they were all sitting. Glenville, assuming more courage than some of the family, rose from his seat with considerable trepidation to ascertain the cause of

this extraordinary intrusion. The door being opened, he beheld with terror a middle aged female, with her hair disbevelled, and her looks wild and solicitous, like a person in the deepest distress. It was his mother! Her countenance was still beautiful, and her eye tender and expressive, though in the agonies of death. She entered the parlour, and approaching Mr. Mortimer and his family, rebuked them with great severity for detaining her beloved Howard at the vicarage, when his presence might have soothed the anguish of her last hours. Deeply affected with the scene, which impressed his feelings like the mournful reality, he sprang forward eagerly to embrace and console his afflicted mother, when the exertion awoke him in extreme agitation and distress.

So powerful was the visionary effect, that for some minutes after he perceived it to be a dream, he could scarcely help thinking he still heard the footsteps of his mother, and saw her death-like features as she retired from the room. He was, indeed, soon convinced that these ideas, however vivid, resulted merely from the intensity of his feelings, and might be accounted for by the melancholy and affecting scenes his imagination had portrayed. Yet he found it impossible to resume

his usual composure, or to dissipate the gloomy forebodings excited by the dream. But he continued sleepless and agitated, indulging tender thoughts and painful apprehensions, till the morning light beamed through his chamber windows.

Nothing could be farther from the mind of Glenville, than a superstitious regard to dreams and other imaginary prognostics. Nor was any one more firmly persuaded that the vulgar notions of spectres and apparitions, or the supernatural intercourse of departed spirits, have no foundation in fact, but are traceable to imagination or imposture. But he was nevertheless unable to obliterate these impressions, or to avoid the anticipation of some mournful event. And though he believed the associations of his dream were occasioned by his previous anxieties, yet there was something in it very extraordinary, which seemed to intimate that, by some inexplicable law of nature and providence, it might be the harbinger of bereavement, and the presage of sorrow.

Upon his return to the metropolis, these fears were confirmed by a letter from his father, announcing the serious indisposition of Mrs. Glenville, and her particular desire to see him at the Lodge as speedily as possible. Having given

directions to a friend for the settlement of his affairs, he left town by the mail; and the next morning arrived at his native village. But, alas! how altered was the scene, and how different his feelings, as he approached within sight of the beloved spot. The recollection of departed years, so happily spent in the bosom of his family, and the joy formerly expressed at his return, viewed in contrast with his present fears, and the grief he was going to witness in every face, overcame his fortitude, and constrained him to enter the village with sighs and tears.

On arriving at the Lodge, Glenville exerted all his resolution to sustain and mitigate the impending evil. Having overcome the shock of the first interview with his mother and the family, he anxiously inquired the symptoms of her disease, and the probability of its removal. From the report of the faculty, the danger did not appear to be immediate, although slender hopes were entertained of her recovery. A slight indisposition, of which Mrs. Glenville had occasionally complained for some months previous, being increased by a cold recently taken, was now accompanied with a slow bilious fever, which had baffled the means employed for its removal, and created in the family many

painful apprehensions of their approaching and irreparable loss. But for several days after Howard's return, a pleasing revival took place in her appearance, which greatly revived the hopes of Mr. Glenville and the family. She conversed with more freedom and energy, and by the calm and heavenly manner in which she expressed herself, softened their distress, and in some degree prepared them for the approaching change. She was very communicative to Howard, and seemed particularly glad that she had once more an opportunity of seeing him.

"My dear Howard," said she, "I am unable to express the satisfaction your return affords me. Ever since this attack became serious, I have been most anxious to see you, and have not ceased to think of you night and day. I wished for one more opportunity of conversing with you, on a subject of the greatest importance, before my departure to a better world."

"Be assured, my dear mother," answered he, "that nothing could exceed my anxiety to see you, as soon as I received the painful intelligence of your alarming indisposition. But, though I am filled with anguish to find you in this state of weakness, we must not abandon the hope of your

recovery. No, my dear, my beloved mother, let us hope, a kind providence will regard our prayers, and preserve a life so dear to us all, and so essential to our happiness."

"My dear Howard," said Mrs. Glenville, "I have no wish to discourage these feelings, or to increase the distress already depicted in your countenance. But though I feel considerably revived since you came, I cannot entertain such hopes, and should do wrong to flatter you to the contrary. From the beginning I have felt a strong presentiment, impressed on my mind in a manner which I am unable to describe, that this affliction is intended for my speedy end. But the mysterious hand which afflicts, kindly sustains me under it. I am thankful that the faith I embraced in health, now supports me in the day of sickness, and the prospect of eternity. I have no fear of death, or of its final consequences. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able and willing to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. And were it not for the strong and endearing ties which bind me to this life, I could rejoice in the prospect of my speedy dissolution. O my husband! my children! my friends! so much beloved, and so deserving that love! how

strongly my heart clings to you! how much I wish to live for your welfare! how agonizing the separation that awaits us! Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done!—Since then his will seems to have determined otherwise, I would resign the objects of my tenderest affections to his all-wise providence. And I think I could now make that surrender with a tranquil spirit, if I could first see my children walking in the truth, and enjoy the soothing hope of again meeting you all in glory.”

“O my beloved mother,” exclaimed Howard, “if the separation must come, nothing can support us under it, but the hope of being again united for ever. Do not let your last days be embittered, or the comfort you otherwise possess, diminished, by any distressing apprehensions on our account. I hope and trust there is no cause for such fears. For though we have too often given pain to the kindest of parents, yet I hope it is our habitual desire to be all that your fond wishes dictate, especially in reference to God and eternity.”

“I hope and believe so too, my dear Howard,” replied Mrs. Glenville. “One beloved child is already in heaven, and will soon, I trust, welcome me to the same blissful regions. And it is my ar-

dent prayer and dying solicitude, that those whom I am going to leave, may tread in the same footsteps, and be always in readiness for death and judgment. By a steady course of religion and virtue, my dear children may not only expect the largest share of solid enjoyment in this world, but, what is of infinitely greater consequence, may hope to be again united with ourselves, and with all the wise and good for ever, in the superior happiness of the world to come. But you know, my dear Howard, the fear and distress we have felt on your account. And though I believe a merciful providence has delivered you from the snare; though I trust you have wholly renounced the pernicious principles of infidelity; though I hope you not only see the truth and excellence of the gospel, but feel its power and enjoy its hopes, as the only sure resting place of the soul, and the only true antidote of human suffering; yet, my dear, my most beloved child, I want to be again assured from your own lips that it is so before I die!"

Howard was overcome with the agitation of his own feelings. While she made this appeal to him, his heart rose and swelled, and forbade the utterance of his thoughts. At last, a flow of tears came to his relief, and enabled him to meet the wishes and calm the anxieties of a dying mother.

"Most excellent of mothers," exclaimed he, "what can I say, or how can I describe my feelings? I can find no terms sufficient to express my regret for the injury done to your happiness by my late scepticism. But I hope an assurance of my recovery to the faith, so dear to your own bosom, will more than compensate for what is past, and impart to you the purest satisfaction in the prospect of eternity. For I can most truly assure you, my beloved parent, that I am not only convinced in my judgment that christianity is divine, but I feel the witness in myself, and am confident from my own experience, that it is the power of God and the wisdom of God to the salvation of every one that believeth. I am, therefore, not ashamed of the gospel, but willing to stake every thing upon its faithfulness. And I trust, by the assistance of the divine Spirit, my faith will remain unshaken, and my devotion to the Saviour inviolate till the last hour."

"My dear Howard," rejoined Mrs. Glenville, "I am quite satisfied. I want no further testimony. I am thankful to God for granting me the desire of my heart, the object of my most fervent prayer. And now I could die in peace, were it not for one circumstance which still preys upon my spirits. It has long been an object of anxious

solicitude to your dear father and myself, and is intimately connected with your temporal interest and final happiness. I wish, O I wish, this one difficulty could be removed before my departure!"

"My dear mother," said he, "do you mean my connexion with Lavinia? Do you think the renewal of it possible? Have you reason to believe that Lavinia would accept, or that Mr. and Mrs. Randolph would sanction my assurance of undiminished attachment? If you have, I shall want no other inducement to make known my desires. Oh, if that connexion, once so dear, could be renewed, and a kind providence would raise you up to witness the solemnization of it, how great, how inexpressible would be my happiness! Forgive me these rhapsodies, my dear mother, if I have mistaken your intentions."

"No, no, Howard," said she, "you have not mistaken my object. You have said all I wished, and removed all my anxieties on that ground, O the kindness of God to one of the weakest and most unworthy of his servants! One more interview with our long-esteemed friends, and I shall sleep in peace. But, I feel exhausted with talking, and must endeavour to compose myself an hour or two."

In the course of the day, a message was received

from Mr. and Mrs. Randolph, inquiring after Mrs. Glenville's health, and expressing their anxiety to see her, if the state of her affliction should permit. In reply to this message, Mr. Glenville mentioned the alarming symptoms of Mrs. Glenville's complaint; but said she was particularly desirous to see Mr. and Mrs. Randolph with Lavinia, the first opportunity. They accordingly arrived on the morrow, and were deeply affected when they perceived Mrs. Glenville's case to be more dangerous, and the fears of the family more distressing than they expected. But the vivacity of her animal spirits, always greater than her strength, powerfully excited by the presence of her friends, concealed some of the worst symptoms of her malady, and seemed to indicate an appearance of internal strength and undiminished cheerfulness. She derived much pleasure from the conversation of Mr. and Mrs. Randolph. Their expressions of sympathy were very consoling to her mind. Their observations, likewise, on the mysteries of providence, the design of present sufferings, the promises of sacred writ, and the prospects of a nobler state of being, evinced the excellence of their own principles, and rendered this affecting interview of christian friends mutually endearing and beneficial.

When Mr. Randolph and his daughter had retired, and Mrs. Randolph was sitting alone by her afflicted friend, Mrs. Glenville adverted more particularly to Lavinia, and expressed the warm affection she had always had for her. "But," continued she, "the suspension of her correspondence with Howard, once so agreeable to all of us, is a circumstance which preys much on my spirits, and renders me at times very unhappy. I was therefore anxious to see you on this account, and hope our present interview may remove the anxiety we have so long suffered in consequence of past events. I rejoice exceedingly that my son is now a decided christian, of which he has given me sufficient proof. And if I could see his connexion with Lavinia renewed, in hope of its consummation a year or two hence, I think I could die in peace, and resign my dear children to a gracious providence without anxiety or fear. I am confident Howard's attachment to Lavinia is undiminished; and if you and Mr. Randolph approve, I hope she will not be averse to renew the correspondence."

"My dear friend," replied Mrs. Randolph, "I can give you every satisfaction on that point. The only ground on which we advised Lavinia to discontinue the acquaintance, has been happily re-

move; and you cannot but be desirous of a renewal more earnestly than we did. And though I have not heard a syllable from Lavinia on the subject, I believe her attachment to Howard was so sincere and so steady, that she cannot be averse to his renewing the correspondence. For Mr. Randolph and myself, I can venture to assure you, that if Howard is still attached to Lavinia, he will find in us no obstruction to his wishes."

"I thank you a thousand times, my esteemed friend," said Mrs. Glenville, "for this explicit avowal of your thoughts. It has relieved me of a heavy burden; and I shall now feel at ease. Indeed, I do wrong, perhaps, in the chamber of sickness, and on the very verge of the tomb, to think of a subject like this, much more to introduce it to your notice. But the happiness of my family lies near my heart; and I wish my last advice, my last efforts, and my last prayers, may contribute to their present and eternal welfare. But I have now done. My chief, my only concern now shall be, to wait the divine disposals, and to meet the last conflict with the faith and patience of a christian. May the Saviour grant me his presence in the gloomy hour, and then receive me to his kingdom and glory!"

"In these sentiments, my beloved friend, we would all unite," replied Mrs. Randolph. "While life remains, we are bound to make the best use of it, for the benefit of our families, and the world, as well as for our own true interests. But the healthiest of us may fall by a sudden stroke; and the brightest hopes we cherish in relation to the present world, may as soon be extinguished. We should therefore moderate our affections for every thing earthly: and much as we value the friendships that sweeten this life, we should be looking most intensely for the friendships that will never terminate. You, my dear friend, have long cherished this sentiment, and can look forward to the last hour without dismay. And if a mysterious providence should refuse our prayers for your recovery, let us hope the separation will be transient, and the final union between us everlasting. To that state, so glorious in the prospect, may we and our families all come! Then, my friend, shall we be satisfied when we awake in the divine likeness. For 'in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand, pleasures for ever more.'"

Howard was too much affected by the dangerous illness of his beloved mother, to receive Mr. and Mrs. Randolph with his usual vivacity, or to

offer those demonstrations of respect which he desired. But he embraced an opportunity to whisper into the ear of Lavinia, how happy he was in once more meeting a friend whom he had never ceased to regard with the tenderest affection. And though she appeared much agitated by the allusion, and soon turned the conversation to another topic, he fancied her eyes, half moistened with a tear, told him that she was not averse to his company. Under this presumption he soon after declared his mind without reserve in a long letter; and at the same time briefly sketched the history of his experience since the suspension of their correspondence, and expressed the unspeakable delight its renewal would afford him. Lavinia's affection admitted no scruple. She was confident of his sincerity, and prepared to receive him with undiminished regard. And though prudence checked the spontaneous effusions of the heart, she returned a favourable answer to his letter, and thus happily restored an attachment never more to be dissolved.

In the mean time, Mrs. Glenville's constitution discovered increasing symptoms of debility and decay. The malady which seemed to be subdued, returned with greater violence; and her frame, already shattered, was unable to repel the stroke.

The hopes of her family, which for a while mitigated the affliction, were at last extinguished, and every day threatened to be the last. But her mind continued calm; her faith and hope unshaken; and her prospect of future happiness unclouded. While her strength lasted, she often expressed the support religion imparted to her, and gave her attendants the most excellent advice. And when the symptoms of death became more appalling, and her end evidently approached, she embraced her children for the last time, commending them to the divine blessing, and consoling them with the hope of another and better union. And in a short time afterwards, with all the serenity and fortitude of a christian, she expired without a struggle or a groan, in the arms of her afflicted husband!

Mr. Glenville bowed to the stroke with silent and submissive agony. His fortitude, though strengthened by religion, nearly failed him in the trying hour. To be bereaved of his bosom friend, the companion of his youth and manhood, the centre of his earthly affections, whose virtues as a christian were equalled only by her conjugal and maternal tenderness, was a calamity which he looked for with dismay, and bore with the deepest anguish. Painful necessity, however, and a due

concern for his family's welfare, combined with the consolations of religion, and a principle of submission to the divine will, by degrees soothed his anguish, and restored him to a calm and dignified serenity.

But on the tender heart of Emily, this bereavement left an impression too deep to be effaced. Her constitution, which was naturally weak and delicate, and had often excited many fears, soon betrayed some alarming symptoms of decline, and threatened a still further inroad on the domestic happiness of Mr. Glenville. No medicinal assistance could avail. A gradual decay of strength took place, and in less than twelve months, she followed the spirit of her departed parent to the mansions of the blessed. She bore her affliction till the last with becoming fortitude, and resigned herself to the divine sovereignty without a repining. The thought of being separated so early in life from her beloved friends, was evidently painful. But she had found and applied the sovereign antidote of the gospel. The hopes of a better world, where there shall be no more curse, shed a light over the dark valley of the shadow of death; and while it sustained the dying, in some measure reconciled her mourning relatives to their loss.

None of the family felt this bereavement more

severely than Howard. Through all the stages of her malady, his mysterious dream extinguished in his own mind all hope of her recovery, and gave a predictive certainty to those forebodings, which a kind providence in general mitigates to the last by the soft glimmerings of hope. But if his affectionate spirit felt the severity of these trials, his judgment was not slow to improve them. He perused with greater evidence than ever, that faith alone can support us in the last hour, or sufficiently fortify the bereaved. Under every trouble, he found no solace like the scriptures. The more he read them, the more he saw the excellence of their contents, and their adaptation to human suffering. His faith acquired new strength in the season of affliction, which refined his virtues, and gave to his piety a steady and celestial ardour.

With these sentiments he began to feel less satisfaction in his legal studies, and was less ambitious of distinction in the great world. And though his ardent mind thirsted after knowledge, and wished to grasp the whole circle of philosophy, yet his thoughts involuntarily turned to those subjects which bear upon human happiness, and identify knowledge with salvation. He therefore sometimes thought of resuming the profession he had formerly

chosen, and was, like St. Paul, desirous of preaching the faith he had once laboured to destroy.

In the meantime, Glenville's correspondence with Lavinia was carried on with mutual satisfaction. Mr. and Mrs. Randolph and the family, did all in their power to soothe his feelings, and supply the place of his departed friends. Every fresh interview with Lavinia confirmed his attachment, and induced him to look forward with increasing pleasure to the period of its consummation. After making the necessary arrangements, their union was at length solemnized with the brightest prospects of happiness, which every circumstance in life, and the mutual congratulations of both families, for a few months combined to realize.

But, alas! how uncertain is the tenure of all sublunary bliss! The sun of prosperity, which had beamed with unusual splendour on the nuptials of Howard and Lavinia, was destined to suffer an eclipse. Their happiness seemed too great for this mixed and imperfect state of being: Glenville was seized with a violent fever, which for some time threatened the most serious issue; and though subdued, it left him in a state of extreme debility, which he thought would terminate in his death. Under this presentiment, which was happily not

realized, he dictated the following letter to his friend Mortimer, with which we shall close these Memoirs of his early life and theological inquiries.

My dear Mortimer,

When I received your kind letter of christian condolence, under our late family bereavements, my thoughts were enlivened by the prospect of brighter days. Those prospects have since been realized, and your last found me in the possession of happiness worthy of its cheering congratulations. But, alas! my friend, how precarious are our best enjoyments here! How often is the hour of fruition followed by the hour of disappointment and the approach of death! A change, a sudden change, has taken place in our prospects, and a severer still seems to be awaiting us. I now write to you from the border of the grave, impressed with a deep and painful presentiment that you will hear from me no more.

The alarming disease under which I am now suffering, like many events in providence, appears very mysterious and afflictive. But I have no right to complain. My assurance of the divine wisdom and goodness, even in the most gloomy and inscrutable dispensations, forbids me to repine.

I confess, the desire of life, and the still stronger ties that bind me to my other self, shrink from the fatal hour. Yet I desire to submit with silent resignation to the trial, and to wait with composure the divine purpose. So many are the evidences of divine goodness in the economy of providence, and so numerous the fruits of it to myself, that no solitary events, however severe or difficult to account for, should be allowed to shake my faith, or disturb the serenity of christian confidence.

The thought of a speedy separation from my dear Lavinia, is indeed sometimes too distressing to be borne. Her society has more than realized my most sanguine expectations; and her tender assiduities night and day, still soothe me in affliction. When I see the swelling tear bursting from her eye, as she examines my altered countenance, and supports me on the pillow, my resignation fails me; and if I attempt to say, "Not my will, but thine be done," conscience reproaches me with insincerity. But in calmer moments, the force of sympathy happily gives way to religious principle; and I sometimes hope, if we must part, I shall be able to resign all that my heart holds most dear in this world to Him who bestowed the blessing. And the separation, should it come quickly, will not be

final; it will not be long. The survivor will soon follow, to enjoy the happiness of a better union, where the intercourse of kindred spirits will be perfect, and suffering and mortality be no more.

During the solitude and watchings of a sick chamber, my busy thoughts have often turned to the past, and endeavoured to trace the course of my brief history. Many incidents have come fresh to my recollection; and though many painful emotions have been revived, I have felt a kind of melancholy pleasure in yielding to the impression. As it respects myself and my engagements, I see much in the review of life, to censure and regret. And though in many cases I meant well, the memory of my wanderings and defects should repress the vanity of self-confidence, and clothe me with christian humility.

But with respect to divine providence, in the destiny assigned me, and the course of events through which I have passed, I see much, very much, to deserve praise. When I consider the secondary causes which have combined to fix my principles as a christian, and the happiness of my social life, I am utterly at a loss for terms to express my admiration of the divine goodness. And though many things seemed mysterious and afflictive at the time, I am conscious that the

effect has in some cases been most salutary, and have no doubt this will ultimately be the case with all.

The trials that have befallen me since our last interview, though painful to bear, have served to confirm the truth, and illustrate the excellence of the gospel. Indeed, the more I consider the new testament, the more its claims and credentials rise before me with overwhelming force, and bind me to its cause with a sweet and inviolable devotion. I am sometimes astonished at myself, that the superficial and hypothetical reasonings of infidelity, should have so far misled my judgment, and seduced me from the truth. For though the objections we were once in the habit of making against christianity, may, separately considered, appear formidable, they are absolutely lighter than air, when weighed in the balance with its direct proofs and unquestionable excellence. If the admirer of the natural system, who beholds around him countless instances of benignity and wisdom, would think it absurd to have his principles disturbed by a few solitary incongruities; why should we permit our faith in the gospel to be shaken by a few discrepancies which may shade the lustre or disturb the harmony of its divine truths? I cease to wonder at the glowing terms in which aged


christians of decided piety express their faith ; and am only anxious to catch their mantle when they ascend to glory.

As to the points so much controverted among christians, I have endeavoured to read and think so as to adopt those views which most evidently accord with the new testament. Beyond this I am determined not to allow my opinions to be perplexed, nor my charity limited. The religion of Christ is not systematic nor sectarian. Its essential facts, the doctrines arising from them, the duties required, and the sanctions which enforce them, are written with inimitable simplicity, suited to the generality of mankind, the unlettered, the unsophisticated, and the poor. Its simplicity and adaptation to human indigence, are equalled only by the grandeur of its principles, and the aspect of divinity visible in all its truths. Would we receive christianity in its purest form, it must not be through the alembic of human controversy, but from the sacred repositories of the new testament. Assured of the sufficiency of scripture, and receiving the grand truths of the gospel, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit hath taught, comparing spiritual things with spiritual ; what need have we of more?

Resting on this ground, my dear Mortimer, we may safely leave the abstruse distinctions of metaphysical theology, and the doubtful points of sectarian violence, to employ the time and irritate the tempers of vain heresiarchs and angry polemics.

I mention these things to you, my esteemed friend, even on the verge of the tomb, because I see and feel the utter vanity of all things, except the great salvation so plainly taught in the sacred volume. It is my peculiar satisfaction that the Lord Jesus, not only died for our sins, and rose again for our justification; that he not only abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel; but that he has clearly revealed the medium through which life will be given, and the terms of its actual enjoyment. I have therefore now, in the solemn prospect of eternity, no foundation to rest upon but the atonement of Christ, the grand scheme of mediatorial redemption, so explicitly revealed in the holy scriptures. But, in resting on the promises of the new covenant, I find ample security; and from the past, I derive an assurance for the future, which will not fail me in the last hour.

As to the connexion of these principles with moral goodness, it appears to me to be immediate



and inseparable. I know too well, my dear Mortimer, that many who own christianity to be divine, and strenuously contend for its public forms, are a disgrace to humanity. But if their faith were genuine, if they had that interior sense of its importance to themselves which true faith includes, purity of morals would be the necessary consequence. The christian doctrine of divine favour to the guilty, when they repent and believe the gospel, can never countenance sin, but was designed, and has been found to be the means of attaching its objects more firmly to their private and social duties. All its facts, its evidences, its doctrines, and its privileges, no less than its direct sanctions and commands, are admirably calculated to expand our views, to rectify our motives, to elevate our affections, and to raise the character of the christian to the highest attainable perfection. No incentives to virtue derived from the proud systems of sceptical philosophy, can be compared with the efficacy of the gospel, when received in its native purity and power.

“Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding love!
Thou maker of new morals to mankind!
The grand morality is love of thee!”

I have thus far endeavoured, my dear Morti-

mer, faintly indeed, to express the sentiments most dear to me, in the chamber of affliction, and in the view of another world. Should a benign providence extend the term of my earthly existence, my time and talents shall be devoted to the cause of truth and the best interests of humanity. But if you should next hear that the grave is about to receive me, let this be regarded as my dying testimony, and be communicated to those of our former companions who may wish to know the last and most deliberate sentiments of a christian friend. With the affection of a brother, and the hope of sharing with you in the same inheritance for ever, I remain, dear Mortimer,

Your most affectionate friend,
Howard Glenville.

March 17th, 18—

END.

ERRATUM.

Vol. 2, p. 150, l. 3, for *wisdom* read *evidence*.

Mullinger, Printer, Bishops Stortford.



